

ANDROGYNE, MON AMOUR (1997)

**A music theatre work
for male double bass player
and two digital soundtracks**

**by
BARRY TRUAX**

based on poems by Tennessee Williams

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LIBRETTO

The stage lights come on to reveal the performer standing astride the instrument which is supported at the neck on the seat of a chair (upstage from the audience), the tailpiece downstage. The performer is facing the audience but we cannot see his face as his head is lowered and his hair is falling over his face. As the lights come on, he seems to be rising from an even lower position over the instrument, though this is momentary.

The performer is barefoot, though a pair of loafers are to the side of the chair. His dark trousers are loose fitting, and gathered at the waist with elastic and no belt. His shirt is completely unbuttoned and worn outside the trousers, giving the impression that this is a bedroom scene.

Two bows have been inserted into the f-holes of the instrument in front of the performer, balanced in such a way that they are crossed; otherwise the performer can support them gently. After a few moments, the performer slowly begins to draw them up and down across the wood around the holes, which when amplified gives a kind of noisy breath-like sound. Alternatively, the crossed bows are used on the edges of the instrument.

Note: the live part is performed from memory, so there is no music stand.

I. You and I

The bows are finally and conspicuously withdrawn from the instrument, held in the air for a moment, then crossed again to bow the open strings, that is, the right hand bows the lowest string, the left hand bows one of the higher strings behind the bridge.

Note: all of the text is heard on tape read by a male voice

*Who are you?
A surface warm to my fingers,
a solid form, an occupant of space,
a makeshift kind of enjoyment,
a pitiless being who runs away like water,
something left unfinished, out of inferior matter,*

*Something God thought of.
Nothing, sometimes everything,
something I cannot believe in,
a foolish argument, you, yourself, not I,
an enemy of mine. My lover.*

The lines of this text are separated by pauses, and the bass part seems to echo the text. At a certain point during it, the performer moves to a crouched position to the right of the instrument such that he can stop the strings with his left hand and play with a single bow in his right. The slow pace of this section with its pauses, allows various effects to be created despite the awkward playing position. The text and caressing gestures make it clear that the instrument itself is being personified as the performer's lover.

II. Cruising

The performer now gets up, buttons a few of the bottom buttons of the shirt, tucks it inside his trousers, leaving several of the top buttons undone, slips on his shoes, and ties his hair back in a pony-tail. He plays the instrument in the conventional posture but in an extroverted manner during the first half of the text, and in a more sombre manner for the rest.

*Noontime youths,
thighs and groins tight-jean-displayed,
loiter onto Union Square,
junkies flower-scattered there,
lost in dream, torso-bare,
young as you, old as I, voicing soundlessly a cry ...*

*Androgyne, mon amour,
shadows of you name a price
exorbitant for short lease.
What would you suggest I do,
wryly smile and turn away,
fox-teeth gnawing chest-bones through?*

*Even less would that be true
than, carnally, I was to you
many, many lives ago,
requiems of fallen snow.*

*Androgyne, mon amour,
cold withdrawal is no cure
for addiction grown so deep.
Now, finally, at cock's crow,
released in custody of sleep,
dark annealment, time-worn stones
far descending,
no light there, no sound there,
entering depths of thinning breath,
farther down more ancient stones,
halting not, drawn on until*

*Ever treacherous, ever fair,
at a table small and square,
not first light but last light shows ...
Androgyne, mon amour.*

III. Winter Smoke

The performer continues in the conventional playing posture, with each couplet echoed with a different style of playing, e.g. ponticello, harmonics, double stops, snap pizz.

*Winter smoke is blue and bitter:
women comfort you in winter.*

*Scent of thyme is cool and tender:
girls are music to remember.*

*Men are made of rock and thunder:
threat of storm to labor under.*

*Cypress woods are demon-dark:
boys are fox-teeth in your heart.*

IV. Liturgy of Roses

This section is performed on high harmonics, the performer hovering intimately over the instrument. At the beginning of the section, the performer is seated in the chair, cradling the instrument in his arms. He echoes the tape with similar fragments of the following text.

This is for you for whom bloom certainly roses ...

*and all of those doors floating open on those who have roses
going to those who have roses, in chambers which those without roses
possess no license to enter.*

*Roses, all roses, the immense impartiality of all God
and all roses,
orifice emptying, never emptied of roses.*

*Because you are tolerant only of those who have roses,
Your eyes ... saying, These roses, all roses, my roses,
Though still in the arms of those who came bearing roses.*

*And by the same token confessing: My tongue, my tongue,
not your body,
my body, my body, not yours,
while murmuring You, while continually murmuring
You, you, you, which is translated to I
no matter how murmured to whom.*

V. Wolf's hour

The performer carefully lays the instrument down on its left side, slightly to stage left. He pulls a pack of cigarettes from his shirt pocket and takes one out. He goes over to the chair, and with his back to the audience and cigarette in his mouth, takes off his shirt and puts it on the back of the chair. He releases his hair, slips off his shoes, and sits down on the chair and lights up the cigarette, arms on his thighs, looking weary and pensive. Every so often he looks over at the instrument.

*Well, it's three A.M.
after an hour's sleep and a blond youth who declined to stay with me.
Wolf's hour of night is not well-spent alone.*

The performer slowly gets up, butts out the cigarette and returns to the instrument, first caressing its "shoulder", then its back, then gradually raising it to a more or less standing position but always keeping his arms around it as much as possible.

*Nevertheless there is this bit of comfort:
in my hands' curved remembrance there remains indelibly
the unclothed flesh of the youth who refused to stay longer,
and I could settle for less,
God knows if not unknowing.*

VI. The Ice-Blue Wind

The performer slips on a necktie and tightens it over his still bare torso. He lengthens the support for the instrument to its maximum position, and stands on the chair to play it, mainly *sul tasto*. The image is slightly bizarre and of distorted proportions that give the following scene an air of unreality.

*Being expert on the zither
he gave concerts twice a winter ...*

*His fingers knew The Ice-Blue Wind
that single score and nothing more.*

*But what of that? It did suffice
to close him in a wall of ice,*

*Tinged with distance, always blue,
which somehow warmed him through and through.*

*Long, long after all had gone,
and in the hall crept winter dawn,*

*He would strike a final string,
take a bow and proudly shin*

*Up a column up to the roof,
in union with The Absolute.*

VII. You and I

The performer gets down off the chair, returns the instrument to its normal height and lays it down on the chair in the propped position of the opening. He removes the necktie, puts his shirt back on, leaving it unbuttoned and loose. He picks up the instrument and bow and plays with the text, reminiscent of the opening.

*Who am I?
A wounded man, badly bandaged,
a monster among angels or angel among monsters,
a box of questions shaken up and scattered on the floor,*

*A foot on the stairs, a voice on a wire,
a busy collection of thumbs that imitate fingers,
an enemy of yours. Your lover.*

At the last phrase, he carefully lays the instrument down in the propped position of the opening, moves downstage to face the instrument, back to the audience, kneels, and as the lights fade, appears to embrace the instrument.

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ANDROGYNE, MON AMOUR
for Robert Black

music by Barry Truax

text by Tennessee Williams*

Bass
visible inhale/exhale
bowing f-holes (2 bass)
bow removed and held in air
on bridge
bow in the air

Tape
breath-like gestures
 Who are you? A surface warm to my fingers Who are you?

B
move to side of instrument and stroke the strings w/ body
tap body
on side of bridge

T
 A surface warm to my fingers A solid form, an occupant of space A makeshift kind of enjoyment A pitiless being who runs away

B
collegato-jeté
tremolo between strings with end of bow (screws)

T
 like water Something left unfinished, like wa—ter— out of inferior matter Something God thought of Nothing, sometimes everything No—thing—

B
pizz.
raising instrument a little each time

T
 Something I cannot believe in, a foolish argument you, yourself, not I my lover An enemy of mine my lover my lover

B
(upright)
senza tempo, molto rubato, slowly then somewhat faster
slower

T
 My lover my lo—

B
dim.
f

T
mf

Bass *rit... rit... slow, rubato*
mp mf f accel... dim...

Tape
breath
 2:04 2:13 my lover my lover my lo— ver

B *Action (see Libretto)*
improvise a lively snap pizz rhythm to match tape but also responding to text
in synch with "fox-teeth"

T
 2:37 *Jazzy snap pizz.* 2:58 Noontime youths ... Androgyne ... suggest I do- wryly smile, bones through
 .. soundlessly a cry fox-teeth fox-teeth

Even less would that be true than, carnally, I was to you many many lives ago, requiems of fallen snow

B *mp Sul tasto*

T

Even less would that be true than, carnally, I was to you many many lives ago, requiems of fallen snow

B *seize tempo following text*
f

T

Androgyne, mon amour, cold withdrawal is no cure for addiction grown so deep. Now, finally at

B

T

cock's crow, released in custody of sleep, dark annealment, time-worn stones far descending, no light

Bass

Tape

there, no sound there, entering depths of thinning breath, farther down more ancient stones, halting

B

T

not, drawn on until ever treacherous, ever fair, at a table small and square, not first light, but last light

B

mf very steady, molto rubato e espressivo

in pauses

T

shows ... Androgyne, mon amour Androgyne, mon amour—

4:58

B

rit... dim...

T

5:18 sul pont.

B

legato, sul pont.

mf

T

5:29 -Winter smoke is blue and bitter: women comfort you in winter. Winter smoke is blue and bitter: Winter—

B

T

women comfort you in winter. 5:39 Scent of thyme is cool and tender: girls are music to remember Girls are—

Bass *I* *ff*

Tape

Scent of thyme is cool and tender: girls are music to remember Men are made of rock and

B

T

thunder: threat of storm to labor under. Men are made of rock and thunder: threat of storm to labor

B *mp* *legato* *lib. rh.* *3 7 legato* *under*

T *6:09* *in* *pause*

B *dim.* *subt. pont* *as before b b* *legato* *mp* *3* *1* *→ pont* *→ ord.*

T *in* *pause*

demon-dark: boy are fox-teeth in your heart. Cypress woods are

B *(seated, cradling instrument)* *begin to speak text fragments (see libretto) in any order*

T *6:35*

B *I* *II* *I* *III* *(random collage of "roses" text)*

T *7:00* *ad lib. but not higher than 10th harmonic + high harmonics* *continue using text* *cresc.*

Bass

(continue speaking text)

Tape

~ 7:25

... my tongue ...

... these roses, my roses ...

B

(fade out speaking) dim.

~ 7:54

+ harmonic gliss (6)

T

all of those doors - orifice emptying... because you are tolerant ...

8:00

This is for you for whom bloom certainly roses - and all of

B

#2

II

I

T

those doors floating open on those who have roses going to those who have roses, in chambers which

those without roses possess no license to enter. Roses, all roses, the immense impartiality of all God

B

T

have roses, your eyes saying, these roses, all roses, my roses, though still in the arms of those who came bearing roses

slow, senza tempo
mf molto espressivo
artificial harmonics
 Bass
 Tape
 if not unknowing.

11:47 Un ——— clo ——— —thed file ——— sh *dim.*
 (action, see libretto)

fade-in (resonant pitches only) + high harmonics
 12:22 *sul fado*
 T
 Being expert ..

B
 T
 His fingers nothing more But what of that ...

IV
 B
 T
 Long, long ... winter dawn take a bow ... with the absolute

mime pizz. and hold till, then action (see libretto)
freely, imitating text rhythm
 B
 T
 Who am I? A wounded man badly bandaged,

random pizz
 B
 T
 a monster among angels or angel among monsters, a box of questions shaken up and scattered on the floor,

⊗ these notes played without expression, gazing away from instrument, with head movement only on beats 1 and 6 (each time) and 8 (optionally)

Bass *legato* *spritely* *f*

Tape

A foot on the stairs, a voice on a wire a busy collection of thumbs that imitate fingers

B *dim.* *l.h. pizz.* *l.h. pizz* *arco 3* *espressivo* *legato 3* *molto rit* *fin—gers*

T

an enemy of yours. Your lover an enemy of yours your lover

B *freely*

T *+ high harmonics (G)*

B *3* *rit* *(action, see libretto)*

T *3* *slowly, tenderly* *dim.*

~ 15:33 crackling sound breathy sound 15:43 Androgyne, mon amou 16:00

Jerry Armax

Hartford, CT Jan. 1977

ANDROGYNE, MON AMOUR

Text fragments from "Liturgy of Roses" for use by the performer

*This is for you for whom bloom certainly roses
and all of those doors floating open on those
on those who have roses
going to those who have roses
in chambers which those without roses
Roses, all roses
the immense impartiality of all God and all roses
orifice emptying, never emptied of roses
Because you are tolerant only of those who have roses
These roses, all roses, my roses
still in the arms of those who came bearing roses
confessing: My tongue, my tongue, not your body,
my body, not yours while murmuring You
body, my body, my body, not yours
while murmuring You, while continually murmuring
while continually murmuring You, you, you
no matter how murmured to whom*