

Berliner
Festspiele

MAERZ
MUSIK

Mi | Wed 26.3.2025

19:00

Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtnis-Kirche

CHAN:
Sonnets and
Devotions
in the Wilderness

Komponiert von | Composed by Susie Ibarra
mit Gedichten von | with poems by
Don Mee Choi und | and Logan February

Don Mee Choi

Sacred Glacial Lake Tsmongo

mit | with Otay:onii (Lane Shi), Martin Nagy, Jake Landau,
Gunnhildur Einarsdóttir, Susie Ibarra

Speaker Tree Interlude 1

mit | with Don Mee Choi, Susie Ibarra, Gunnhildur Einarsdóttir

Logan February

Sonnet 1, To Try Touching Heaven

mit | with Martin Nagy, Otay:onii (Lane Shi), Sebastian Heindl,
Caleb Salgado, Elena Kakaliagou, Hilary Jeffery

Speaker Tree Interlude 2

mit | with Logan February, Susie Ibarra, Hilary Jeffery

Don Mee Choi

Pasig River

mit | with Otay:onii (Lane Shi), Daniel Doña

Speaker Tree Interlude 3

mit | with Logan February, Susie Ibarra, Elena Kakaliagou

Don Mee Choi

Beech Tree Forest

mit | with Otay:onii (Lane Shi), Martin Nagy,
Sebastian Heindl, Caleb Salgado, Jake Landau,
Don Mee Choi, Susie Ibarra

Speaker Tree Interlude 4

mit | with Don Mee Choi, Susie Ibarra, Michiko Ogawa

Don Mee Choi

Berlin Warsaw Glacial Spillway

und | and

Logan February

Sonnet 2, To Try Touching Heaven

Gesamtes Ensemble mit | Full Ensemble with
Logan February, Susie Ibarra

Don Mee Choi
Sacred Glacial Lake Tsomgo

I, oval depth 15 meters
I'm over —

-met-a-shy-yak-with-red-gloves-on-its horns-adorned-wool-tassels-

Primrose icicles
Toes, woes —

-snow-irises-stood-tall-amongst-bamboos-surely-you-nowhere-to-be-heard-

Himalayan poppies
I call out —

-saw-boundless-light-on-glass-sharp-rocks-of-him\\a///la-la\\yas-

Flaming rhododendrons
Bayan ko —

-ripples-replied-I-miss-her-over-the-hydrophone-(ko)-(ko-ko-ko)-()-(ko)-

Note: *Bayan* [country] *ko* [I/my] in Tagalog means *my country*. It was a protest song against the American occupation of the Philippines. The flora mentioned in the poem grow in the Tsomgo Lake region. Domesticated yaks are also residents of the lake. Susie Ibarra listened and recorded the sound of the lake with a hydrophone. She also created music/rhythm on site by playing bamboo shoots.

Don Mee Choi

Pasig River

memory meanders Laguna Lake its massive crow's foot
born from twin volcanos
memory meanders alluvial scarf memory meanders fresh

runoff Pasig meanders as a lone eyelash Pasig please come back
but rain rain sonically me
me meanders to Manila Bay you say O my long

forgotten sister bay Subic her skirt memory of naval base
meanders memory meanders during high tide Pasig a lone eyelash

algae murmur hyacinth hairpins turbid bubbles declared
biologically dead scenic Pasig please come back but rain rain

Don Mee Choi

Beech Forest From Ulleung Island To Rügen Island

Long ago a mountain spirit
asked the villagers to plant
100 chestnut trees on an island

Orchids, snowdrops
wild garlic, hedgehog fungus
knew the face of every migrant
and their song 너도,너도밤나무((((you too are a chestnut tree))))

Pineneedleless to say, that's how small the island was

^ Mountain spirit counted and counted yet there were only 99 chestnut trees

))))))))),,((((((((

Trees quivered
and buttercups
(hic (cup (ped (

FOREST AFTER FOREST
it snowed

f

a skinny little beech tree in moss overcoat said to the spirit ^

나도,나도밤나무((((I too am a chestnut tree))))

Note: Beech tree in Korean is 너도밤나무 or *neodobamnamu*, meaning *you-too-are-a-chestnut-tree*.
Beech forests can still be found on Ulleung Island, east of mainland South Korea.
The flora mentioned in the poem are from the beech forests of Rügen Island, Germany.

Don Mee Choi

Warsaw-Berlin Glacial Spillway

~ if it weren't so, if it weren't so ~
crystalline snow
Holocene dunes
on top of permafrost

~ if it weren't so, if it weren't so ~
ice age woolly
mammoth tooth
sorely me, solely Spree

~ if it weren't so, if it weren't so ~
pink chronic peats
inside squirrel burrows
sugar sweet seeds

~ if it weren't so, if it weren't so ~
cryosphere Berlin
otherwise ether
my silene serenade

~ cundiman, cundiman ~
~ sorely you, solely Spree ~

Note: *Cundiman*, also written *Kundiman*, and *kung hundi man* in Tagalog means *if it were not so*. *Silene stenophylla* is a flowering plant that still grows in the Siberian tundra region. Scientists were able to grow the plant from fruit stored by squirrels in their burrows 30,000 years ago during the ice age. Berlin lies on top of dunes of mostly sand and peats – strata of sediment and plant matter left behind as the glacier retreated near the end of the Ice Age.

Logan February

To Try Touching Heaven
A Kundiman-Sonnet Duo

Urgent in the evening sky, your body: a mountain rage I watch
from a window seat, silhouetted in the eagle-eyes of slow descent.
Gravity is a psychic order, a force of desire. What calls me to you
like a tide to break upon the rocky shore is what pulls me

off too, into lasting horizons ... it is our native intuition.
What else remains after life, if not the epic of life? An ocean
abandoned in my leaving, traded for a new sea arriving.
Both are one fluid fantasy, a long ancestral song. My Atlantic,

my Thalassic. We meet between the measureless miles, always
briefly, beloved, but what we forgo is not forgotten.
On wings, without end, I glide over your bodies of ancient water,
no perch, no resting place but my dream of being again with you.

I tell you, my odyssey is across a land of the dead. I speak
as a thing rooted in the earth, damned to try touching heaven.

Gravity declares against the desperate, a ruthless conductor
in spite of slow motion. My fingers, tendrilous, cannot reach
the tender thing. And left of the sky, the evening is no longer young.
We must be composed at the same speed as memory fades.

Had I not lost myself and my motherland remained— Had I not
to be uprooted, fated to shed this symphony of falling leaves—
A green vein branching out its way from the middle path.
Wake now, my city, before the sun climbs over sea, before

we are finished withering. I don't know where to put the poems of
how I got here, I place them in the slender leaves. Between the lines,
a league, a lightyear. You and I are disciples of desire, good citizens
of severance, subservient to gravity's trajectory and timekeeping.

I sing of you from the seashore, the forest floor, the hilltops.
But you, my love, do not come. You must remain.

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#MaerzMusik

