

ANON(YMOUS) BY NAOMI IIZUKA
directed by guest artist Josiah Davis
rehearsals begin January 21
performing February 23-28

In consideration of the tensions at the southern border of the US and global refugee migration at an all-time high, we will explore the memories of the human heart. What are the sensations we hold in our heart when everything else has been taken? The stories we replay and rewind in our dreams. How do we figure out who we are? What is family? What is found family? How do we find home when the location no longer exists?

Looking for twelve (12) actors. All race, ethnicity, gender identity, and ability HIGHLY encouraged to audition. It is imperative to the success of this production that this cast is constructed with actors of various backgrounds and lived experiences that glitter across the diaspora. This request is not to check boxes but to be specific and accurate in our representation of the global majority.

Please prepare one (1) side and a short song that you love and showcases your voice. It's okay if you are not a good or professional singer just do your best! All roles are not represented in the sides.

Masks are intimately integrated into the costume design and will be performed in an outdoor amphitheater. Although there will not be a virtual element to this production, we will be taking every precaution to keep you safe according to the COVID guidelines. You will never be asked to do anything you are uncomfortable with. 🧡

Come play with us!

Email josiah.davis@furman.edu (director) or clarebeth.mcconnell@furman.edu (stage manager) with questions or if you would like a copy of the script.

Please complete the audition and crew application form prior to January 19. Once you submit the online form, you will receive the Zoom link for auditions.

<https://forms.gle/YkG4pa8PY88AU7>

GUIDE for ANON(YMOUS) AUDITION SIDES

Anon (child) any gender poc

Sides: put Part 2, 11, and 12 together

Nemasani(mother) - female identifying poc

Sides: pg12 - all of Part 4

Naja (goddess)

Sides: all of pg 8, cut all of Anons lines

Calista (teen rich gurl)- female identifying

Sides: pg 14 - put the 3 big chunks together. Cut "that's crazy" in last chunk

Mr. Yuri Makus (factory manager)

Sides: chunks on pg49

Mr. zyclo (shady butcher)

Sides: chunk on pg36

Pascal (runaway street kid)

Sides: first 3 lines on pg31 plus the chunk in Part 21

side for NAJA

(The sounds of war begin, faint and distant.)

begin

CHORUS OF REFUGEES. Where I come from is high up in the mountains and the sound of thunder is so loud it sounds like the end of the world.

Where I come from is the edge of an ocean so blue you can see straight to the bottom, and the sound of the waves crashing is so loud it sounds like the end of the world.

Where I come from giant birds circle overhead, so many you can't count them all, they caw caw caw, and the sound they make is so loud, it sounds like the end of the world.

(The CHORUS OF REFUGEES disperses in all different directions. NAJA remains. The sounds of war grow closer.)

NAJA. Do you remember?

~~ANON. No.~~

NAJA. All those memories—

~~ANON. I don't remember.~~

NAJA. Can you hear them—

~~ANON. No.~~

NAJA. You can't hear them, all those memories inside of you? You've locked them inside for so long and now they're pounding against your rib cage, against the walls of your heart. Can you hear them? Listen.

(Whispered fragments from the first chorus. The sounds of war grow closer.)

~~ANON. I don't know how to begin. I don't know where to begin.~~

NAJA. Ssssssh.

Begin in the middle.

On the border.

On the crossing.

Begin in the place in between.

(NAJA begins to recede from view. Night falls. The sky is vast and inky blue. The sounds of war grow closer. Distant gunfire. The whistling of bombs falling from the sky.)

end

2.

(ANON is alone in the night.)

ANON.

Where I come from is far away from here.

Where I come from there was a war that lasted so long

People forgot what they were fighting for.

Where I come from bombs rained down from the sky night after night

And boys wandered the streets with M-16s.

Where I come from mines are planted in the roads like deadly flowers, And the air smells like death, rank and sticky sweet.

Where I come from you go to sleep at night

And dream about the faces of the people you love.

(Light on NEMASANI. She sings an ancient song. ANON sees her.)

ANON. You dream the face of the one person you love. And that person, that person becomes like home. Their eyes. Their skin. Their voice, the sound of their voice. And so you dream about that person. You dream about home. You dream about going home.

(ANON approaches NEMASANI. The sounds of war grow. They get so loud. It sounds like the end of the world. The whistling sound of a bomb falling from the sky. The whistling grows louder, closer. NAJA emerges from the darkness. She pulls ANON out of the path of the bomb. They leap into a vast, uncharted darkness. An explosion, blinding white light. The sounds of war transform into the sound of sewing machines.)

3.

(A sewing factory in a city somewhere in America. The sound of the sewing machines like a hive of metallic bumblebees. A mountain of fabric reaching up to the heavens. Rows of sewing machines one after the next as far as the eye can see. The CHORUS OF SEWING LADIES sews in perfect unison. NEMASANI is one of the sewing ladies. She sews a shroud. Enter MR. YURI MACK-US, the manager of the sewing factory. He escorts SENATOR and MRS. LAIUS around the factory floor.)

(The sounds of war begin, faint and distant.)

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ANON. I don't remember—

NAJA. Can you hear them—

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NAJA. You can't hear them, all those memories inside of you? You've locked them inside for so long and now they're pounding against your rib cage, against the walls of your heart. Can you hear them? Listen.

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Side for ANON

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continued

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ALI. Your mother used to wear jasmine blossoms in her hair. I come across that scent sometimes and it takes me back. All of a sudden I think of something from years before, some tiny thing. A piece of a memory, like a shiny coin at the bottom of a well.

(NASREEN approaches RITU and ALI. RITU wraps her arms around her daughter. ANON watches the family from a distance. NAJA approaches ANON.)

NAJA. What do you remember?

(The sounds of distant war.)

ANON. I don't know where to begin. I don't know how. I don't know how to begin.

NAJA.

Begin in the middle

On the border

On the crossing.

Begin in the place in between.

(The sounds of distant war grow closer. NAJA, ALI, RITU, and NASREEN recede from view.)

Side for ANON (continued)

11.

(ANON remembers. Chaos in a burning city far away. The sound of rockets and mortars. Lightning. Thunder. The city transforms into an ocean. A tiny boat on a giant ocean. Night. He sees NEMASANI. She sings the same wordless melody she sang before.)

ANON.

I remember my mom and how she used to hold me.

She held me when the bombs fell.

She held me when the ground shook and the city burned.

She held me on the night that we escaped.

She held me in the belly of the boat as we sailed across a giant sea.

I remember how she held me.

and then one night there was a terrible storm.

(A storm at sea. Winds howling. Sheets of rain. A terrible cracking sound. The boat splits apart. An explosion of water. NEMASANI vanishes under a giant wave.)

Side for ANON (continued) 12.

(The roar of the surf. ANON is in the ocean. Water as far as the eye can see. Night. Tiny lights shimmer in the distance.)

ANON. The next thing I remember: I was floating in a giant ocean. In the distance, I could see tiny lights. I started swimming towards them. I swam even though my clothes were soaked through and my arms and legs were numb, even though it hurt to breathe. I swam and I swam. I swam until I couldn't swim anymore. And then everything went black.

(Blackout. Everything is darkness.)

PASCAL. Pssst. Wake up. Wake up. Quick. Come on.

(The sound of a siren. Shouts. The sound of footsteps on pavement on steel containers. The clank of chainlink. The sound of running. ANON and PASCAL are running through the darkness. Glare of headlights. The sound of a city. They run. They run. They run.)

13.

(A tunnel underground. Graffiti and a giant L & N painted on the wall. The sound of rats. PASCAL and ANON catch their breath. PASCAL is West African. He has traditional scars on his face, thin horizontal lines.)

PASCAL. They won't come after us here.

ANON. Who were they?

PASCAL. Police. INS. Rent-a-cop. Who knows.

ANON. Where are we?

PASCAL. Tunnel.

ANON. What's that sound?

PASCAL. Rats. Giant rats. Five foot long, nose to tail. They live down here. They eat human flesh. They got a taste for it. They hunt for humans in the night. They go in packs. And if they find you alone and sleeping, they attack. They rip you to shreds. They tear out your insides. They rip out your still beating heart.

ANON. I didn't know rats came that big.

PASCAL. What? You don't believe me.

end

MRS. LAIUS. He drowned! That's awful. It's so tragic, it's just so tragic. I feel your pain, I really do. How did it happen? If you don't mind me asking. It helps sometimes to talk, you know, to share. That's what human beings do, they share, they share their joy, they share their pain, it's only human, we're only human, you can tell me, go on tell me—and maybe I can help.

(The sewing factory transforms into the ocean.)

begin

4.

(Night. The ocean. Light on ANON. He holds a toy boat which he steers through a dark ocean. It's night.)

NEMASANI. Where we come from, there was a war. And my son and me, we escaped. We escaped in the middle of the night. We sailed out to sea in an old fishing boat. There were so many people all crammed together, old people and little babies. We huddled together in the dark in the belly of the ship. We listened to the roar of the waves. We listened to the boat creak and moan. And then the storm started.

(The storm begins. Lightning. Thunder.)

NEMASANI. The winds began to howl. The sky opened up and the rain came down, sheets and sheets of rain. And the lightning lit up the sky, bright bright light, and the thunder crashed. And the sound was so loud. And suddenly a giant wave rose up. It rose and it rose like a wall of water, and then it fell over us, and swallowed us whole.

(The wave crashes down. Darkness.)

end

5.

(The sound of the surf. Light up on a tropical beach somewhere in America. A boy named ANON and a girl named CALISTA sit on the beach. CALISTA wears a bathing suit. ANON wears street clothes. ANON examines the broken toy boat. CALISTA has a camera. She takes pictures. Music plays on a portable CD player.)

ANON. Someday I'm going to sail away.

CALISTA. No you're not. Don't be silly. You're not going anywhere. This is your home now.

ANON. It's not my home.

CALISTA. Yes it is.

ANON. It's not my real home.

CALISTA. Yes, it is. Now look at me. Look at me. Smile. I SAID SMILE.

(CALISTA snaps a photo of ANON.)

CALISTA. You're very photogenic. You could be a male model. You're so swarthy and exotic. That's very in right now. Exotic is very in. I wish I were more exotic. I'm too pale. I wish I had a tan. I wish my skin was the color of café au lait.

(A new song begins on the portable CD player.)

CALISTA. Ooooooh I love this song.

(CALISTA dances, and then she stops.)

Do you want to watch TV. We could watch TV on my giant flat screen plasma TV. It's so cool. It's so flat.

ANON. No thanks.

CALISTA. What about a snack?

(CALISTA retrieves a bag of candies. She begins to eat. She eats a lot. She stuffs her face with candy.)

CALISTA. I have M&Ms and Kit Kats and Nestlé's Crunch and Snickers and Reese's Pieces and Charleston Chews and Sweet Tarts and Lemon Heads and Skittles and Spree.

ANON. I'm not hungry.

CALISTA. Suit yourself.

CALISTA. We could do something else. We could kiss. You could kiss me. Do you want to kiss me?

ANON. No.

CALISTA. That's OK. You can kiss me later.

ANON. I'm never going to kiss you.

CALISTA. Fine.

ANON. Not now or later. Not ever.

begin CALISTA. FINE! *(Pause.)* Why are you so mean to me? You should be nice to me. I saved your life. You washed up on the shore of my dad's luxury beachfront condo and you weren't even breathing. I fished seaweed out of your mouth. I administered C.P.R. I gave you the kiss of life just like I learned in summer camp. And I thought you were so handsome and exotic and not like any of the boys from around here. I saved your life and you're so ungrateful! You won't even tell me your real name!

~~ANON. I told you my real name.~~

~~CALISTA. Your real name is not "Nobody." What kind of mom names their kid "Nobody"?~~

~~ANON. Don't talk about my mom.~~

CALISTA. I mean I'm sure she was nice and all, but it's not even like she's even part of your life anymore. I mean she's probably dead and even if she's alive, it's not like she's been trying that hard to find you. Honestly, if you want my opinion, she's probably moved on with her life. I know I would. I bet if you showed up on her doorstep like right this second, she probably wouldn't even know who you were. She'd probably be like: "Who are you? Do I know you?"

~~ANON. I SAID DON'T TALK ABOUT MY MOM! *(Pause.)* OK look, I can't stay here anymore. I can't do it.~~

~~CALISTA. Why not? It's nice here. It's pretty and clean. And I have satellite TV.~~

~~ANON. I gotta go. I'm going to lose my mind if I have to stay here one more day.~~

~~CALISTA. Where would you go?~~

~~ANON. Home.~~

~~CALISTA. But this is your home.~~

~~ANON. My real home.~~

CALISTA. Your "real home"? ~~That's crazy.~~ Your "real home" is a dirty little third world shack with no running water. It's raw sewage in the streets and malaria and cholera and all kinds of disgusting parasites I don't even want to think about. I'm just saying how it is. Don't be mad. Now you're mad. Let's kiss and make up.

~~ANON. No.~~

~~CALISTA. Why not?~~

end

ANON. Because I hate you and every time you open your mouth, I want to stuff sand down your throat.

CALISTA. OK you know what? I don't care. I don't care what you think. I don't care what you want. You will eat my Skittles and my Kit Kats and my Spree. You will enjoy my flat screen plasma TV. And you will love me.

(Enter NAJA from the ocean. She's a surfer. She wears a wetsuit. She has a surfboard.)

NAJA. Hey.

ANON. Hey.

NAJA. Remember me?

ANON. Yeah. Kinda.

CALISTA. Where did you come from?

NAJA. He called me.

ANON. I did?

NAJA. He sent telepathic brain waves out into the universe and I was listening.

ANON. You were?

NAJA. I was. I'm a really, really good listener.

ANON. That's cool.

NAJA. I know.

ANON. That's really cool.

NAJA. I know.

CALISTA. Uh, excuse me. Who are you?

NAJA. I'm a goddess. And you are?

CALISTA. I live here. My dad owns this place. He owns everything as far as the eye can see. He's very, very powerful. That's who I am.

NAJA. Is that supposed to impress me?

CALISTA. I'm just saying how it is.

NAJA. You know? You're like really pale.

CALISTA. Yeah? Well you're like really rude.

NAJA. Yeah, but you're really pale. How does a person get to be so pale? You're like Wonder Bread. You're like mayonnaise.

ANON. No.

PASCAL. Liar. You're scared. I can see it in your eyes.

ANON. I'm not scared.

PASCAL. Yeah you are. You ran like a little girl just now.

ANON. Then that makes two of us.

PASCAL. Come again?

ANON. I said that makes two of us. Little girl.

PASCAL. I'm not a little girl.

ANON. No you're right. You're just a liar.

PASCAL. What did you say to me?

ANON. You heard me. Liar.

(PASCAL rushes ANON. They fight. They fight. And then eventually they stop. A draw. They sit in the dirt in silence.)

ANON. Why did you help me? Before, I mean.

PASCAL. I don't know. I guess you looked like you needed some help.

ANON. Thanks.

PASCAL. Whatever.

(They sit in silence. PASCAL pulls out potato chips from his bag.)

PASCAL. Hungry?

ANON. Yeah.

(PASCAL shares his bag of potato chips with ANON. They eat.)

PASCAL. Where did you learn English?

ANON. My mom, she taught me.

PASCAL. Yeah?

ANON. Yeah.

PASCAL. I'm Pascal.

ANON. *(Seeing the L & N sign:)* I'm Lan.

PASCAL. Lan, huh?

ANON. Yeah. Lan.

begin

(PASCAL and ANON stare each other down. ANON's eyes drift to the scars on PASCAL's face.)

PASCAL. Didn't nobody tell you it's rude to stare.

ANON. Sorry.

PASCAL. Where I come from, they cut your face when you turn thirteen. Like a warrior. You got any scars?

ANON. No.

PASCAL. Everybody got scars. Maybe yours you just can't see.

(A SHADOW emerges from the darkness looking for food. ANON starts for him.)

continued...

PASCAL. *(Holding ANON back:)* Don't. He don't hurt no one. He lives down there.

ANON. What's wrong with him?

PASCAL. What's wrong with him? He's high. He's high as a kite.

ANON. He looks like someone I know.

PASCAL. Yeah? He could be. He won't remember if he is. His brain is fried. He don't remember nothing. He don't remember where he comes from, he don't remember his family, he don't remember the names of his kids. All he thinks about is getting high.

ANON. He must be lonely.

PASCAL. He ain't alone. He's got lots of company.

(Other SHADOWS appear. They fill the tunnel. A faint rumbling.)

Right on time. Come on, Lan. Or whatever your real name is.

(PASCAL scrambles up a ladder to a ledge at the top of the tunnel. A bright light approaches.)

You stay down there, you're gonna get squashed like a pancake. You think I'm foolin', you watch and see.

(The rumbling gets louder. The light grows brighter. ANON hesitates, then scrambles up the ladder. The sound of steel against steel. The roar of a giant engine. A train bears down. PASCAL and ANON jump onto the roof of a boxcar. And then the train thunders past.)

side for PASCAL continued

21.

(The world is engulfed in fog. The distant sound of war. IGNACIO is walking away. ANON tries to catch up with him, but he can't.)

ANON. Hey. Wait. Wait, come back.

(IGNACIO vanishes. STRYGAL appears. Ghostly white. He clutches the steering wheel of his truck.)

Hey. I want to talk to you. Hey.

(STRYGAL vanishes. BELEN appears. She's holding her suitcase. She's walking past ANON.)

Belen? Belen, is that you?

(BELEN turns around. ANON sees her dress is red with blood.)

Belen, wait.

(BELEN continues walking away. ANON tries to follow her, but he can't keep up. He loses her. The sound of war. PASCAL appears.)

PASCAL. Where I come from soldiers came to my village. I saw them coming, and I ran into the forest. I hid beneath the leaves. I was so still. I could hear everything. I could hear the sound of fire and men shouting. I could hear my little brother. I could hear him crying and my mother saying don't cry, don't cry. I could hear the machetes. I could hear their screams. And then it was quiet. It was so quiet. All I could hear was the sound of my heart beating. Will you remember me?

ANON. Pascal?

PASCAL. When you're old and you look back, will you remember me? Will you remember a friend who died long ago?

(PASCAL recedes from view.)

end

ANON. Pascal? Pascal, wait—

CHORUS OF REFUGEES.

I disappeared.

I became invisible.

I ran away.

I escaped.

I shed my skin.

I changed my name.

I became anonymous.

My name is anonymous.

My name is anonymous.

My name is anonymous.

ANON.

My name is anonymous.

My name is anonymous.

My name is anonymous.

(The sounds of war grow closer. The CHORUS OF REFUGEES disperses in all different directions. The whistling of bombs falling from the sky. They get closer. ANON hears a woman singing a fragment of a familiar song. NEMASANI becomes visible. She sings. ANON begins to go towards her. The sound of a bomb falling. NAJA appears and pulls ANON out of the path of the explosion. The world shatters. Brilliant light. Dust motes swirling in the light. Then darkness.)

22.

(ANON is alone in the darkness.)

ANON. There was a war and me and my mom, we escaped on a boat. And then there was a storm, and the boat we were on sank and lots of people drowned. I know this for a fact. And later I was in a refugee camp. And then later I was adopted by a nice American family. These are facts.

(Light on NICE AMERICAN FAMILY posing for a photograph. The FATHER is played by the actor playing Senator Laius, the MOTHER is played by the actor playing Helen Laius, and the DAUGHTER is played by the actor playing CALISTA.)

They lived in a fancy house full of so many things. But they weren't my family and it wasn't my home. And I ran away. That's a fact, too. These are all facts. But facts are only part of the story.

(Camera flash. the NICE AMERICAN FAMILY recedes from view.)

side for MR. ZYCLO

ANON. It's cold.

PASCAL. Don't complain. We earn some money, and then we go.

ANON. How do we know he's gonna pay us?

PASCAL. He'll pay. Before you know it, we'll earn enough money, we can go anywhere. We can do whatever we want.

ANON. I don't like this place.

PASCAL. It's just a job. You think too much.

ANON. Maybe you don't think enough.

PASCAL. Maybe you should shut up.

(ZYCLO'S PET BIRD bursts through the door at the back of the room. She wears high heel shoes. She looks at ANON and PASCAL. She squawks and then exits. The click click click of her heels.)

ANON. What's in there?

(ANON opens the door. Slabs of meat hang from hooks. Blood drips. The opera music grows in volume. MR. ZYCLO appears. He holds a hatchet. He approaches PASCAL and ANON as he speaks.)

begin

MR. ZYCLO. Have you seen my bird? I have a little pet bird. I feed her little morsels from my hand. She's very tame. I coo to her and she coos back. This is my freezer. It's very cold. Aren't you cold? I have to keep it cold like this or else the meat gets bad. Look at all this meat. Isn't it strange? When you cut off the head and scrape off the skin, when you boil away the fat and the gristle, it's hard to tell what something was. Was it a cow? Or a pig? Or a goat? Was it a little baby lamb? Or was it something else? A different kind of meat? Fleshy and tender and vaguely familiar. Do you know what goes into my sausages? Do you know what makes them so mouth-wateringly delicious? Do you have an idea? The tiniest inkling? What? Cat got your tongue?

(MR. ZYCLO raises the hatchet. Blackout. The sound of the hatchet whizzing through the air and then a dull thud as it hits. The sound of the giant steel door closing. The sound of opera stops. Then the sound of a bird whistling.)

end

16.

(Lights up. The giant steel door to the outside is closed. MR. ZYCLO is making sausages with a meat grinder. Blood is everywhere, on the floor, on the walls. His white coat is splattered with blood. PASCAL is gone. ANON watches MR. ZYCLO. ZYCLO'S PET BIRD clicks and paces frantically. The click click click of her high heel shoes. She chirps and squawks and caws throughout the scene trying to speak.)

ANON. Where's my friend?

MR. ZYCLO. What friend?

ANON. His name's Pascal. And he was here, he was right here just a second ago.

MR. ZYCLO. There's nobody here named Pascal. You must be confused. There's just me and you and my little pet bird.

ANON. He was right here. He was standing right here.

MR. ZYCLO. What was your name again? I don't think you ever said.

ANON. Uh, monkey.

MR. ZYCLO. Monkey. How delightful. You do look a little like a monkey, one of those worried little monkeys you see in the zoo. They look like little old men, nibbling on a piece of fruit, scratching at their fleas, racing around their cage looking for a way out except, of course, there is no way out.

(ZYCLO'S BIRD squawks.)

MR. ZYCLO. What a noisy bird. I used to have two, but then one of them, he flew away.

(ANON tries to open the steel door.)

MR. ZYCLO. Now I keep the door shut tight or else she'll fly away, too, and then I'll be all alone.

(ZYCLO'S BIRD squawks and caws frantically. A crescendo of squawking.)

MR. ZYCLO. BE QUIET, BIRD, OR I'LL COOK YOU IN A POT. (To ANON:) How do you like your meat, monkey? Well done or rare?

(ANON doesn't respond. MR. ZYCLO opens a box, takes out a bottle of wine, uncorks it.)

23.

(Light up on RITU, ALI, and NASREEN in the kitchen of an Indian restaurant.)

ANON. I think that your life is made up of all these bits and pieces. And sometimes the pieces don't fit together. There's a piece that's missing. And you try to fill in the blanks, you try to remember, and sometimes you can see a shape of something you can almost make out, you can almost see a face—

RITU. Your mother's face.

ANON. Yes.

RITU. There's a place I know. On the other side of town. I worked there when we first came to this country. I sewed clothes: blue jeans, T shirts. It was a terrible place.

ALI. It was a sweatshop. They should've shut it down years ago. All those women from all those different countries. So many women from all over the world. Ah, Ritu—

RITU. Yes, Ali. Yes.

ANON. What are you saying?

RITU. It's a small world, stranger, smaller than you think.

ANON. You think my mother—? That's crazy.

RITU. Is it?

ANON. What are the chances? One in a million?

RITU. What do you have to lose? There's no way to know unless you go and see. You've come this far. Trust me. I have an idea. Nasreen, put the rice on. Ali, get the ghee. *(To ANON:)* Now listen to me, listen carefully.

(RITU explains her plan to ANON. NASREEN and ALI begin to prepare food. The sound of cooking. The chopping of vegetables. Running water. Bursts of flame. The sound of sizzling and bubbling. The sound of creation. The kitchen fills with steam.)

24.

begin

(The kitchen transforms into the sewing factory. The SEWING LADIES sew. MR. MACKUS strides towards NEMASANI. SEWING LADY #2 follows him.)

MR. MACKUS. *(To NEMASANI:)* LIES LIES LIES! I've had it with your lies! I'm onto you. You tell me you're going to marry me when this shroud is done, but it's never going to be done, is it? Is it? Because you undo it in the night when no one's looking—except for Vanna here who happened to see what you were up to and had the decency to tell me. Thank you, Vanna. As for you, you deceitful, duplicitous, mendacious minx, your little charade is over. We're getting married now. No more stalling. No more delays.

(Enter ANON with Indian take out.)

MR. MACKUS. Who are you? What do you want? Why are you here?

~~ANON. Somebody ordered take out.~~

MR. MACKUS. Who? Not me. I didn't order any take out. I've already eaten. And they don't eat. Not when I eat. I don't know when they eat. That's not my concern. Why am I telling you this? Why am I even talking to you? I don't have to explain myself.

(NEMASANI starts to exit.)

MR. MACKUS. Where do you think you're going? We have things to do. We're getting married. And then we're going to live HAPPILY EVER AFTER! HAPPY HAPPY HAPPY! THE END!

~~ANON. Leave her alone.~~

~~MR. MACKUS. What did you say?~~

~~ANON. You heard me.~~

MR. MACKUS. Is someone talking? I think it must be a little fly is buzzing around my head. O it's not a fly. It's you. And who are you again? I'll tell you who you are. You're nobody. You're a tiny cockroach I squash with my hand. You're a piece of lint I flick off my jacket. You're chewing gum on the bottom of my shoe. You're faceless and nameless. You're a dime a dozen, people like you.

(NEMASANI tries to get free of MR. MACKUS.)

~~MR. MACKUS. Stop it. Be still.~~

~~NEMASANI. You're hurting me.~~

~~MR. MACKUS. Be still.~~

end

“LOVE’S FINE WIT:” an evening of sonnets

directed by Jay Oney

rehearsals begin March 14

streaming opens April 13

Where there’s a Will, there’s a play!

When a plague outbreak forced the closing of London theatres in the mid-1590s, Shakespeare responded by writing his most famous sonnets. Taking our cue from the Bard, Furman Theatre Arts offers a selection of 24 sonnets for our final show of 2020-2021.

Sonnets are plays in miniature, 14-line distillations of dramatic situations where the speakers grapple with grief, eternity, politics, failure, sexuality, humor, art, and, of course, love.

Alongside some of Shakespeare best sonnets will be poems by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Sylvia Plath, Wallace Stevens, e.e. cummings, Ezra Pound, John Donne, Gerard Manley Hopkins, John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and others.

*“O, learn to read what silent love hath writ:
To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit.”*

Seeking eight (8) actors.

All race, ethnicity, gender identity, and ability encouraged to audition.

The presentation and rehearsal of this piece will be strictly virtual in nature.

Please prepare one (1) sonnet from the selections provided. Memorization would be nice, but, more importantly, make decisions about who you are in the context of the sonnet, who you are speaking to and why, and what goals you wish to achieve.

Email jay.oney@furman.edu (director) with questions.

Please complete the audition and crew application form prior to January 19. Once you submit the online form, you will receive the Zoom link for auditions.

<https://forms.gle/YkG4pa8PY88AUTeo7>

“Love’s Fine Wit.” An Evening of Sonnets

Where We Got the Title

Shakespeare sonnet 23

- 1 As an unperfect actor on the stage
- 2 Who with his fear is put besides his part,
- 3 Or some fierce thing replete with too much rage,
- 4 Whose strength's abundance weakens his own heart,
- 5 So I, for fear of trust, forget to say
- 6 The perfect ceremony of love's rite,
- 7 And in mine own love's strength seem to decay,
- 8 O'ercharged with burden of mine own love's might.
- 9 O, let my books be then the eloquence
- 10 And dumb presagers of my speaking breast,
- 11 Who plead for love and look for recompense
- 12 More than that tongue that more hath more express'd.
- 13 O, learn to read what silent love hath writ:
- 14 To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit.

On Poetry

Sonnet

Billy Collins

All we need is fourteen lines, well, thirteen now,
and after this next one just a dozen
to launch a little ship on love's storm-tossed seas,
then only ten more left like rows of beans.
How easily it goes unless you get Elizabethan
and insist the iambic bongos must be played
and rhymes positioned at the ends of lines,
one for every station of the cross.
But hang on here while we make the turn
into the final six where all will be resolved,
where longing and heartache will find an end,
where Laura will tell Petrarch to put down his pen,
take off those crazy medieval tights,
blow out the lights, and come at last to bed.

THE SONNET

Dante Gabriel Rossetti

A Sonnet is a moment's monument,--
Memorial from the Soul's eternity

To one dead deathless hour. Look that it be,
Whether for lustral rite or dire portent,
Of its own intricate fulness reverent:
Carve it in ivory or in ebony,
As Day or Night prevail; and let Time see
Its flowering crest impearled and orient.

A Sonnet is a coin: its face reveals
The soul,--its converse, to what Power 'tis due:--
Whether for tribute to the august appeals
Of Life, or dower in Love's high retinue
It serve; or, 'mid the dark wharf's cavernous breath,
In Charon's palm it pay the toll to Death.

How I Discovered Poetry
Marilyn Nelson

It was like soul-kissing, the way the words
filled my mouth as Mrs. Purdy read from her desk.
All the other kids zoned an hour ahead to 3:15,
but Mrs. Purdy and I wandered lonely as clouds borne
by a breeze off Mount Parnassus. She must have seen
the darkest eyes in the room brim: The next day
she gave me a poem she'd chosen especially for me
to read to the all except for me white class.
She smiled when she told me to read it, smiled harder,
said oh yes I could. She smiled harder and harder
until I stood and opened my mouth to banjo playing
darkies, pickaninnies, disses and dats. When I finished
my classmates stared at the floor. We walked silent
to the buses, awed by the power of words.

On Anne Hathaway

Shakespeare 145

Those lips that Love's own hand did make
Breathed forth the sound that said 'I hate,'
To me that languish'd for her sake:
But when she saw my woeful state,
Straight in her heart did mercy come,
Chiding that tongue that ever sweet
Was used in giving gentle doom,
And taught it thus anew to greet:
'I hate' she alter'd with an end,

That follow'd it as gentle day
Doth follow night, who like a fiend
From heaven to hell is flown away;
'I hate' from hate away she threw,
And saved my life, saying -- 'not you.'

In his will, Shakespeare left Anne his "second best bed"

Anne Hathaway
Carol Ann Duffy

The bed we loved in was a spinning world
of forests, castles, torchlight, clifftops, seas
where we would dive for pearls. My lover's words
were shooting stars which fell to earth as kisses
on these lips; my body now a softer rhyme
to his, now echo, assonance; his touch
a verb dancing in the centre of a noun.
Some nights, I dreamed he'd written me, the bed
a page beneath his writer's hands. Romance
and drama played by touch, by scent, by taste.
In the other bed, the best, our guests dozed on,
dribbling their prose. My living laughing love –
I hold him in the casket of my widow's head
as he held me upon that next best bed.

On Childhood

Harlem Hopscotch

Maya Angelou

One foot down, then hop! It's hot.
Good things for the ones that's got.
Another jump, now to the left.
Everybody for hisself.

In the air, now both feet down.
Since you black, don't stick around.
Food is gone, the rent is due,
Curse and cry and then jump two.

All the people out of work,
Hold for three, then twist and jerk.

Cross the line, they count you out.
That's what hopping's all about.

Both feet flat, the game is done.
They think I lost. I think I won.

On Grief

Edna St. Vincent Millay

Time does not bring relief; you all have lied
Who told me time would ease me of my pain!
I miss him in the weeping of the rain;
I want him at the shrinking of the tide;
The old snows melt from every mountain-side,
And last year's leaves are smoke in every lane;
But last year's bitter loving must remain
Heaped on my heart, and my old thoughts abide.
There are a hundred places where I fear
To go,—so with his memory they brim.
And entering with relief some quiet place
Where never fell his foot or shone his face
I say, "There is no memory of him here!"
And so stand stricken, so remembering him.

Winter landscape, with rocks
Sylvia Plath

Water in the millrace, through a sluice of stone,
plunges headlong into that black pond
where, absurd and out-of-season, a single swan
floats chaste as snow, taunting the clouded mind
which hungers to haul the white reflection down.

The austere sun descends above the fen,
an orange cyclops-eye, scorning to look
longer on this landscape of chagrin;
feathered dark in thought, I stalk like a rook,
brooding as the winter night comes on.

Last summer's reeds are all engraved in ice
as is your image in my eye; dry frost
glazes the window of my hurt; what solace
can be struck from rock to make heart's waste
grow green again? Who'd walk in this bleak place?

On Nature

The Snow Man

Wallace Stevens

One must have a mind of winter
To regard the frost and the boughs
Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;

And have been cold a long time
To behold the junipers shagged with ice,
The spruces rough in the distant glitter

Of the January sun; and not to think
Of any misery in the sound of the wind,
In the sound of a few leaves,

Which is the sound of the land
Full of the same wind
That is blowing in the same bare place

For the listener, who listens in the snow,
And, nothing himself, beholds
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

e.e. cummings

pity this busy monster, manunkind,

not. Progress is a comfortable disease:
your victim (death and life safely beyond)

plays with the bigness of his littleness
—electrons deify one razorblade
into a mountainrange; lenses extend

unwish through curving wherewhen till unwish
returns on its unself.

A world of made
is not a world of born—pity poor flesh

and trees, poor stars and stones, but never this
fine specimen of hypermagical

ultraomnipotence. We doctors know

a hopeless case if—listen: there's a hell
of a good universe next door; let's go.

Sonnets Passing Judgment

Cold-Blooded Creatures

by Elinor Wylie

Man, the egregious egoist
(In mystery the twig is bent)
Imagines, by some mental twist,
That he alone is sentient

Of the intolerable load
That on all living creatures lies,
Nor stoops to pity in the toad
The speechless sorrow of his eyes.

He asks no questions of the snake,
Nor plumbs the phosphorescent gloom
Where lidless fishes, broad awake,
Swim staring at a nightmare doom.

"The Garden" by Ezra Pound

Like a skein of loose silk blown against a wall
She walks by the railing of a path in Kensington Gardens,
And she is dying piece-meal
of a sort of emotional anemia.

And round about there is a rabble
Of the filthy, sturdy, unkillable infants of the very poor.
They shall inherit the earth.

In her is the end of breeding.
Her boredom is exquisite and excessive.

She would like some one to speak to her,
And is almost afraid that I
will commit that indiscretion.

On Religion

John Gillespie Magee, Jr. *High Flight*

Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds—and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of—wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air.
Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
I've topped the windswept heights with easy grace
Where never lark, or even eagle flew.
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.

John Donne

Death be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so,
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poor death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure, then from thee, much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,
And poppy, or charms can make us sleep as well,
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die.



God's Grandeur

Gerard Manley Hopkins

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;

It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

On Love and Age

Shakespeare 138

1 When my love swears that she is made of truth,
2 I do believe her, though I know she lies,
3 That she might think me some untutor'd youth,
4 Unlearned in the world's false subtleties.
5 Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
6 Although she knows my days are past the best,
7 Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue:
8 On both sides thus is simple truth suppress'd.
9 But wherefore says she not she is unjust?
10 And wherefore say not I that I am old?
11 O, love's best habit is in seeming trust,
12 And age in love loves not t'have years told.
13 Therefore I lie with her. and she with me,
14 And in our faults by lies we flattered be.

Wendy Cope

My glass can't quite persuade me I am old—
In that respect my ageing eyes are kind—
But when I see a photograph, I'm told
The dismal truth: I've left my youth behind.
And when I try to get up from a chair
My knees remind me they are past their best.
The burden they have carried everywhere
I heavier now. No wonder they protest.
Arthritic fingers, problematic neck,

Sometimes causing mild to moderate pain,
Could well persuade me I'm an ancient wreck
But here's what helps me to feel young again.
My love, who fell for me so long ago,
Still loves me just as much, and tells me so."

Shakespeare sonnet 73

1 That time of year thou mayst in me behold
2 When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
3 Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
4 Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
5 In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
6 As after sunset fadeth in the west,
7 Which by and by black night doth take away,
8 Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
9 In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire
10 That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
11 As the death-bed whereon it must expire
12 Consum'd with that which it was nourish'd by.
13 This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
14 To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

On Immortality

Shakespeare sonnet 18

1 Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
2 Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
3 Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
4 And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
5 Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
6 And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
7 And every fair from fair sometime declines,
8 By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;
9 But thy eternal summer shall not fade
10 Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
11 Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
12 When in eternal lines to time thou growest:
13 So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
14 So long lives this and this gives life to thee.

Lines Composed on April 23, 2016, on the 400th Anniversary of His Death"
Wilude Scabere

Shall I compare his language to a grave?
It is more lively and more flowery.
His rough-shook words refuse to be death's slave.
No tomb's as showy or so showery.
A sepulchre, though hard as rock, erodes,
and shrines do often lose their lustre's prime,
while monuments, though nice, make poor abodes,
and sadly catacombs decay in time.
But Shakespeare's language will not go away.
Unceasingly, his lines play in the mind.
They pop up even on a summer's day.
Unlike a crypt, they will not stay behind.
Alas, poor Oracle, his song goes on,
despite all efforts of oblivion.

John Keats

When I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,
Before high piled books, in charact'ry,
Hold like rich garners the full-ripen'd grain;
When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face,
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace
Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour!
That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the faery power
Of unreflecting love!—then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till Love and Fame to nothingness do sink.

On Love

Sonnet 147

by William Shakespeare

My love is as a fever, longing still
For that which longer nurseth the disease,
Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,
The uncertain sickly appetite to please.
My reason, the physician to my love,
Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,

Hath left me, and I desperate now approve
Desire is death, which physic did except.
Past cure I am, now reason is past care,
And frantic-mad with evermore unrest.
My thoughts and my discourse as madmen's are,
At random from the truth vainly expressed,
For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright,
Who art as black as Hell, as dark as night.

Shakespeare 130

1 My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
2 Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
3 If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
4 If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
5 I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,
6 But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
7 And in some perfumes is there more delight
8 Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
9 I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
10 That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
11 I grant I never saw a goddess go;
12 My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.
13 And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
14 As any she belied with false compare.

Edna St. Vincent Millay

I, being born a woman and distressed
By all the needs and notions of my kind,
Am urged by your propinquity to find
Your person fair, and feel a certain zest
To bear your body's weight upon my breast:
So subtly is the fume of life designed,
To clarify the pulse and cloud the mind,
And leave me once again undone, possessed.
Think not for this, however, the poor treason
Of my stout blood against my staggering brain,
I shall remember you with love, or season
My scorn with pity, —let me make it plain:
I find this frenzy insufficient reason
For conversation when we meet again.

Shakespeare sonnet 29

1 When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
2 I all alone beweepe my outcast state
3 And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries
4 And look upon myself and curse my fate,
5 Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
6 Featured like him, like him with friends possess'd,
7 Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,
8 With what I most enjoy contented least;
9 Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
10 Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
11 Like to the lark at break of day arising
12 From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;
13 For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings
14 That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

Of Empires and Monuments

Claude McKay (Harlem Renaissance) *America*

Although she feeds me bread of bitterness,
And sinks into my throat her tiger's tooth,
Stealing my breath of life, I will confess
I love this cultured hell that tests my youth!
Her vigor flows like tides into my blood,
Giving me strength erect against her hate.
Her bigness sweeps my being like a flood.
Yet as a rebel fronts a king in state,
I stand within her walls with not a shred
Of terror, malice, not a word of jeer.
Darkly I gaze into the days ahead,
And see her might and granite wonders there,
Beneath the touch of time's unerring hand,
Like priceless treasures sinking in the sand.

Ozymandias

Percy Bysshe Shelley

I met a traveller from an antique land,
Who said—"Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,

The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal, these words appear:
My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.”

Emma Lazarus, The New Colossus

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.

‘Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!’ cries she
With silent lips. ‘Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!’

One last poem

Do not stand at my grave and weep

by Mary Elizabeth Frye

Do not stand at my grave and weep:
I am not there; I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow,
I am the diamond glints on snow,
I am the sun on ripened grain,
I am the gentle autumn rain.
When you awaken in the morning’s hush
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circling flight.
I am the soft starshine at night.
Do not stand at my grave and cry:
I am not there; I did not die.