

DEATH SERIES WUN : SEXTON SAYS SUM

by Sean Lewis

First Movement:

Sitting With The Dead

Audience is guided to the archive room of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the basement at 155 Milton Street in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. There are, among the archives, rows of chairs facing in the direction of the closed rolling panel door. Maybe there is music playing. Programs are passed out. Audience sits and waits. After a passage of time the panel is opened.

Second Movement:
The Dance

A gesture or
part I of II
the first half of two halves

ethereal
diffuse
distant

without words

careful attention to avoid the macabre

sparse

stillness for an indeterminate period of time opens the second movement
lasting at least 7 and not exceeding 17 minutes

ensemble then enters the frame

all are wearing masks

attention is paid to introducing all members of the ensemble

sometime before, and not exceeding 35 minute mark, an ensemble member breaks
away, walks to the threshold, and stops, facing the audience

he or she removes their mask
pause
panel is then rolled down

The Third Movement:
Intermission

Audience is invited through door leading to the main room of the basement
Room is given new character from previous movement with shift in lighting
Wine is served
This is a brief intermission
Maybe music is played

Chairs are placed in rows directed towards stage hidden by a curtain
Audience is invited to sit and the curtain is drawn

The Fourth Movement:
The Poem

Ensemble

Woman #1: Yuki Wakamaki

Woman #2: Elisa Matula

Woman #3: Alex Kueas

Woman #4: Dawn Saito

Man #1: John Morena

Man #2: Dylan Latimer

Man #3: Sean Lewis

Man #4: Leon Rothenberg

[Notes]

As curtain is drawn we see ensemble sitting in a semi-circle on the stage facing the audience. Light is full and direct. There are no shadows. After a passage of time woman #1 stands, walks center, and addresses the audience.

Woman #1:
September 17, 1982
and,
good morning,
welcome

Man #1:
[as he walks forward] It is a dewy silent morning. [then turning back to his peers] Does he want me to work? Does he want me to move [back to the audience] out there amongst the people? Amongst the dying...oops [covering his lips and mumbling] living? Because I will, I will ... my journey isn't just beginning.
You see,
Stacey died in her sleep
She was not heard from and we are looking for her
Can you help us? [makes a gesture to those sitting behind him]

Woman #2:
The visitors?

Woman #3:
Can you do something?

Man #2:
Yes

Man #3:
Yes

Man #4:
Yes

Woman #4:
Stop making noises! Move your chair! Sit still!

Man #4:
Yes sir
Yes sir
ooops
[covers mouth mumbling]
madame yes madame

Woman #4:
Now sing
Now stand
Now speak
What is the commentary? What are we trying to figure out here? Do you know?
Do you have any idea? Think of something this time. Think of something!

Man #1:
Death
Death
Death

Woman #2:
My neck hurts

Man #1:
It does?

Woman #2:
My neck is stretched. My neck is bent. My neck is shaky. My neck is sore.

Man #2:
boring
bent
bored
Shuffle your feet crowd!
Shuffle your toes, your long toes.
Spacious. Your long toes becoming spacious as gems. Gems in the ground.
Grounded gems. Grounded love system. Grounded ball playing hero.

Woman #4:
fool tooth!
Living Dying Sipping
What space fills with tears when we cry? When we cry the way that we do.
Stacey left us.

Man #4:

Stacey!
Man #3:
Stacey unheard of and unknown
begone
folded in
out of sight
reunited with her only love
reunited with a destiny
crying for days
tears of remembering
tears frozen forgotten
she sleeps heavy turnip footed queen

Man #2:
Ants, arsenic, deign ... I feel sick. I feel sick right now. Smell the ashes.
Smell the horses who wept. The long mains burnt. [singing] Horse hair in a
baby's mouth. [stops singing] Gum. A passage. Several passages left me
wishing I was in another country. A long stone hallway. Cones. Ordinary
perches with 7000 species of birds. All with un-ordinary ideas.

Woman #1:
Bird brain.

Woman #3:
Stains. Shit stains in my underwear this morning. Is there enough space for
us to see?

Woman #1:
Sit down.

Woman #3:
Does the judge have something caught in his or her nose? Can the judge breath?

Man #2:
It was said that "breathing is violet poetry." 18th Century.

Woman #3:
Canons. Warfare. Paper. Stitches. Hoses. Mouth to mouth all day long. Mouth
to mouth all day long.
All day long. He cried like a reindeer with its head stuffed and stumped.

Woman #4:
Fried Chicken Reindeer bucket.

Woman #3:
She laid her tongue between the apostles crotch. She laid her numb tongue
between the apostles crotch and screamed. She screamed holy Jesus. Can you
believe the holy Jesus?
Tears.
All remembered for naught.
All for numbing.

Man #2:

Do you remember when we walked along the beach and you said all those sweet things to me? You whispered into my ear your dream of the night before and I laughed like a teenager.

Woman #3:

Do you remember going into the cubby hole?
Do you play spades?

Man #2:

Jack Knife Girl...

Woman #2:

My finger hurts and this room is cold. More prayer maybe and more washing with both hands, separately.

Man #1:

I work down at the docks. Stacey works in retail. Between pickup when there is a fresh mood, between deliveries we go wild making our way...to a motel believing in future games
believing in reckless(ness)
believing in sparks
that which you believe
that which you wail against you bring nearer
nearer [makes a gesture with his hands indicating nearer to all present]
don't have beliefs
don't have strong opinions
make observations instead
dry hands [again makes gesture with his hands] clean hands. dry feet. gloves.
hamburgers. machines. machines running in gaming hotels. naked purple flowers in your hair. [pointing to someone in the audience] flowers in your socks.
gumballs. Hoses, lips, sinks, dishwashers, lime juice, monkey jungles high grass hips [long pause]
darn it
darn it
I'm sorry
I have to sit down
darn it
darn it all

Woman #1:

I think the Indians are drunk again.

Woman #4:

drunk and stupid. stupid Indian. I wonder how many times that has been said.

Man #3:

voice number one; scared. voice number two; heroic. voice number three; little boy. voice number four; sentimental. voice number five; mountain climber voice. voice number six; a plain cat voice.

Woman #4:
look out over the trees
spy through it with gleaming spirits indian boy
in the disaster
in the future
in the sky
in the revenge make yourself whole
don't judge a minor welt when blasting through is happening
reach into the gutter with your indian(ness)

Woman #3:
is there someone here who will answer my questions?

Man #4:
she left

Woman #3:
at least that's what you [turning] you [pointing] believed happened

Man #4:
she left
she left ME

Woman #2:
she left all of us

Man #1:
Stacey

Woman #1:
Stacey

Woman #4:
Stacey

Man #3:
Stacey

Man #2:
Stacey

Woman #3:
Stacey

Man #4:
Stacey

Woman #2:
[as if she is actually addressing "Stacey"]
Stacey, it cannot be explained
September 17th, 1974
Do you remember? 1974. This very place. 9/17/74

Woman #4:

It was not that day. It was another day. I'm sure, I'm sure of it, I'm sure it was another day. An unlikely day. I was not happy that day.

Man #2:

Yes yes it was another day
it was, and your right, your absolutely right
1974 pinks September pinks
there was a horse race on television
a lazy afternoon
and she was just a girl then
on a Tuesday or a Wednesday
we melted cheese on bread for lunch and we all sat down around a table
there was a seat she always sat in [long pause]
someone dropped something
some glass broke?
I think the table cloth, do you remember the table cloth? Around her
shoulders? She wore the table cloth as a shawl.

Woman #1:

This is all fine and good but where is she?

Man #3:

Where are we?

Man #4:

What happened?

Woman #4:

How did we end up here?

Woman #1:

Don't ask that. Don't ever ask that. Who invited these people?

Woman #4:

What people? I don't see anybody. My stomach is bothering me today. I have a stomach ache.

Woman #1:

These are our guests. Be nice.

Woman #4:

Well, as long as she says so. And you are all sitting here so nicely, so I would like to take this opportunity to share with you a story.

Tuesday the 17th 34 years ago...

Man #1:

No sir! No sir! No oops [covering his mouth mumbling] Madame, no Madame! Not this time, not this time [turning to his peers] Is this the time?

Woman #3:

Shhhh! I want to hear the story. The faces? What about the faces?

Woman #1:

Stop shuffling your feet please. Stop shuffling your feet please.

Man #4:

I'm sorry. It's a nervous tick. Forgive me. Forgive me my tick. Please go on with the story.

Man #3:

It was a pink September 34 years ago when everything changed. I always knew they would, but so unexpectedly, the silence, the shifting. They say "those were *the good ol'days*." [flowers are sat by the speakers side] I always love it when someone brings flowers. The miracle of it [he picks up flowers and inspects] Thee aroma [breaths in deeply and sets down after a pause]. My God! What have we done?! I look at you today and I see all the regret, all the years of misery and contempt compressed in a diamond. Black shimmering, black beauty, crawling through my window at night. I can hear you through my walls. I will bury my head pretending you are not there. Oh forgive me. Where is she? Where did she go?

Woman #3:

Can I say something?

Man #3:

of course

Woman #3:

I drift now. I exist somewhere between this and that. It's the not knowing. The way that the spark is created when struck. The sudden flash. And my eyes open up. Things become so vivid. I fall asleep and I day dream.

Man #1:

Sorry to interrupt you but we must take advantage of this opportunity...

Woman #2:

Lyle. Lyle. Sit down. Lyle! Sit down!

Man #1:

Not this time. I repeat. Not this time.

Woman #2:

LYLE LYLE LYLE
wait a while
please a while
(we prefer when you smile)
wait a while

Man #1:

AHHHH AHHHHH AHHHHH [a cry or scream, an animal, an injury]

Woman #2:

LYLE LYLE

Man #1:
AHHHH AHHHH AHHHHHHH

Woman #2:
wait awhile
LYLE?
(we all prefer when you smile)

Woman #3:
I'm a simple person. Look at me. Look at you. Driven to despair.
Hungry. [turning to the others] They are all so hungry. With misty eyes and
hearts that have wept. [looking out] Maybe this time they have come to tell
us news of another chance

Woman #4:
Stop it. Stop it.

Man #2:
Minor. Minor details. Home town sorts of people. Home town and minor.
Diseases. The air with yesterdays aroma, our noses, filled up [breathes in
deeply]
9/17/74 it was 1974 but it was August not September!
It was August
OOOOH OOOOH
Whooops
Time
Whooops Whooop

Woman #4:
Stop it! Stop it! [to the audience] Will somebody tell him that this is not
necessary?

Woman #1:
Everyone can do as they wish, within limits.

Man #4:
I'm hungry

Man #2:
I'm hungry too.

Man #3:
I'm hungry too.

Woman #2:
I'm hungry too.

Woman #4:
I'm hungry too.

Man #1:
I'm hungry too

Woman #1:
I'm hungry too.

Woman #3:
I'm hungry too.

Man #1:
This type of event always brings out the best in me. Can you see that? Can everyone see that? How this exact type of thing brings out the best in me? Has anyone been to the city lately? Has the frost broken?

Woman #1:
Lets talk about 9/17/74

Man #3:
Stacey? Has anyone seen Stacey? Stacey! Stacey! [calling]

Woman #2:
I just woke up really. The only reason I'm here ... I forgot why I am here. Don't bless me.

Woman #4:
Every muscle in my body when flexed gives off sweet aromas. Stiff, really stiff. I'm here as an ambassador from us to you. Welcome. Clap your hands. Stand up and be joyous. Scream. Now shut up!

Man #1:
Stacey! Are you in the cubby hole under the stairs?

Woman #4:
[with her back to the audience she chastises the speaker]
hush hush hush
Now you listen here
LYLE! LYLE!

Woman #2:
You have no right telling anyone to...

Woman #4:
hush hush hush
LYLE?!

Woman #1:
LYLE!

Man #2:
LYLE!?

Woman #3:
Stacey
Stacey
in September of 1974 everything changed

ALL:

L Y L E S T A C E Y

9 / 17 / 74

Man #2:
there are exits you see
they are lit
what is this place
What is this
my armpits
my insides
the outer layer of things
my breath
horizontally speaking
an incident

[all stand in unison and sing]

*In the garden
I will die.
In the roses
they will kill me.
I was going, mother,
to pick roses,
to find death
in the garden.
I was going, mother,
to cut roses,
to find death
among the roses.
In the garden
I will die,
in the roses
they will kill me.*

[From *Cancionero musical del palacio*, an early sixteenth-century Spanish song book]

Curtain

The End