

YOTAM  
HABER

BLOODSNOW



SIDEBAND RECORDS

I began writing this work in 2019, having been invited to help my friend Blair Braverman on her quest to complete her first Iditarod, the dogsled-race across Alaska. While she was competing with 14 dogs, I was to take care of 18 dogs that she had chosen to leave behind only a day before embarking on the race. 63 miles into the Denali Highway, accessible only by snowmobile or dogsled, I stayed in a cabin the size of a large walk-in closet for what was meant to be two weeks, hitching the dogs to a sled several times a day.

After managing to right the sled with one hand, I stood on the runners, watching the dogs watching me, thinking about my next step. In the moments when I had been on the ground, being dragged, feeling something absolutely wrong happening to my hand, I remember now how very lucid I was: terrorized, thrilled, and simply disappointed that this would prevent me from continuing this dream-like, solitary experience. And as I stood on the runners, a crimson geyser on white issuing from my hand, I was both very afraid and very excited. What comes next, I thought.

This is a piece that explores eruptions of violence alternating with contemplation and solitude.

## BLOODSNOW

(2020)

# THEY SAY YOU ARE MY DISASTER

(2019)

I have set two poems by Israeli poets spanning two generations: Tahel Frosh (b. 1977) and Dorit Weisman (b. 1950). Weisman's poem "Schnitzel" blurs the lines between the act of preparing a meal and the memory of breast cancer surgery. For Weisman, the surgery was a gift of sorts, not a disaster as perhaps many would assume. There is a gentle air of humor and grace to her words that is reflected in my setting. The clarinet and horn act in tandem, offering a distant memory, much like the elegiac descending horn fifth's motive in Beethoven's "Les Adieux," his sonata of absence and farewell.

Tahel Frosh's poem is a love-hate torrent of invective and rage against capitalism while she considers her role as a woman in society. I felt her poem would make a powerful juxtaposition to Weisman's.

I chose to set both poems with a male singer to highlight paradoxically that these are in fact words by women about women. As I sang and composed this work, I felt that I was in some way attempting to enter their minds and glimpse the world from their perspectives.

For the Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation in the Library of Congress, and dedicated to the memory of Serge and Natalie Koussevitzky. With profound gratitude to the Civitella Ranieri Foundation.

# THEY SAY YOU ARE MY DISASTER

## I. Schnitzel

I am separating the breast into pieces, sharpening a knife,  
Removing sinew fats cartilage  
Turning the slice over cutting spreading straightening

I sense the incision of the lymph nodes, underneath the armpit,  
And a bit of the incision in the "breast tail" and at "twelve o'clock"  
Imagining how they sliced my own breast

On the operating table. First they cut open the nodes, I think,  
To take out a sample for examination, a swift sharp incision in the skin  
And underneath red muscles and blood and a quivering lump.

I am removing a long white sinew  
I'm naked, covered by a sheet up to my bosom,  
And then a long incision upwards, bursts out red wide open.

I'm removing one more sinew from the flesh of the breast  
With a scalpel they scrabble inside me with fingers in gloves  
I'm flattening the meat on a cutting board flattening it further with a hammer

I tend and clean, slice by slice.  
Slowly and calmly, very concentrated, and all there is  
Is to decide: bread crumbs or matza meal.

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אני מפרידה את החזה לנתחים, מחדדת סכין  
מורידה גידים שמנים סחוסים  
הופכת את רצועת החזה חותכת פורשת מישרת,  
מרגישה את החתך של בלוטת הלימפה, מתחת לבית  
השחיקצת את החתך ביזנב השדי וגם את החתך של  
'שעה שתיים עשרה:  
אני מסירה גיד לבן מארך.  
חושבת שאצלי פתחו קדם בלימפה,  
אני עירומה, מכסה בסדין עד חזה.  
אחר כך חתך ארך למעלה  
אני מסירה עוד גיד מבשר החזה.  
משטחת את הבשר על קרש.  
פרוסה אחר פרוסה אני מטפלת ומנקה  
לאט ובנחת, מרכזת מאד, וכל מה שיש זו.  
רק ההחלטה: פרוי לחם או קמח מצה

Dorit Weisman

## II. Oh My Bank

הו הבנק שזין זין אותי אתה רוצה לזין אותי טוב ואף טיקון אתה לא רוצה אף, טיקון לא, כן כן כן, הו הבנק שלי אתה רוצה לזין אותי טוב ואף טיקון לא טוב לא, עם הטיקון אתה יושב לארוחת צהרים אצל איל שני ואתם אוכלים חסילונים ברטב שמח אבל איש ישי זקוקים ויצרים יש הרבה תנטוס וזה כידיע עד איהו שהחיים נמתחים

הו אחיי! תתעלמו ממני למי אני עמלה כותבת שירים למי אוכלים שלי במסעדות של איל שני מחזיקים ידים באצבעות משואים שחותמות כרטיסים עבודה, מחזיקים על כל הכתפים כלכלה הו בדרך להפגנה נגד הטיקונים וחסיהם האפלטוניים עם הבנק אני רואה אתכם בטאפס בר אוכלים לטינוס והבשר שלי ריק והשלט שאני נושאת נשאר לעמד כמו זין על ויאגרה, אתם האסון שלי בדרך להפגנה נגד המלחמה

הו אתם! מי שרוצים לעשות כסף הו מי שרוצים להתעשר ומי שרוצים לשלם ומי שרוצים לאכל ואז ליצר כאב על אופני ספורט מהדרים, ומי שלובשים חלצה מכפתרת ומי שלובשים חליפה ומי שעושים קרירה מטאורית ומי שכותבים עליהם ומי שעוברת בהם התרגשות לפני הכניסה למחלקה ראשונה ומי שאוהבים שיש לבן עם עורקים, ומי שיודעים מה שעושה הכסף והם שותקים

הו הבנק שזין זין אותי ואעשה פיגוע התאבדות בלובי אחרי שאלחש עמק ערט וכולם לא יקרה זין אותי למפרע בתשלומים לחמש שנים במסמכים חתומים ואז אצא אל השמש אל הרחוב אחרי אנס לא מוכר על ידי הרשות הו! אף שוטרת לא תבוא להציל אותי ולא ארגוני הנשים ולא ארגונים למען השלום ולא תנו לחיות לחיות

Tahel Frosh

Oh my bank screw me you want to screw me good and not some tycoon you don't want no tycoon, yeah yeah yeah, oh my bank you want to screw me good and not some bad tycoon, with tycoons you sit down to lunch at a fancy restaurant\* and eat shrimp in a cheerful sauce but with me there are fireworks and desires a lot of Thanatos and it's well known this is how life goes

Oh brothers! Take no notice of me and who I am whose work is writing poems for whom for those eating in a fancy restaurant who have hands with married fingers that sign time cards, bearing the economy on all your shoulders oh on the way to a demonstration against tycoons and platonic relations with the bank I see you in a tapas bar eating *carne* and my flesh is hollow and the sign I carry remains erect like a penis on Viagra, you are my disaster on the way to the anti-war demonstration

Oh you guys! Those who want to make money oh those who want to get rich and those who want to spend and those who want to eat and then create aches on elegant bicycles, and those who want to wear button down shirts and those who want to wear suits and those who make meteoric careers and those who are written about and she who's excited to enter the first class compartment and those who love veined white marble, and those who know what money can do and are silent

Oh my bank screw me and I'll carry out a suicide bombing in the lobby after I whisper *semek ars*\* and nothing will happen screw me into five years of installments on signed documents and then I'll go out into the sunshine to the street after a rape that is not recognized by the authorities oh! No policewoman will save me and no women's organization for peace and no animal aid society

\*In the original poem, Frosh twice identifies the restaurant as that of a famous Israeli chef, Eyal Sheni. "Semek ars" is slang, an angry exclamation used in Hebrew that is composed of several Arabic curse words ("coos emek" and "ars") run together and abbreviated.

# RESISTANCE

(2022)

*Resistance*, commissioned by and written for Don-Paul Kahl, is the transformation of a complex sound into an ever-evolving melodic fury. This melodic material eventually devolves and mutates with the passing of quarter tones and disparate slap sounds. These gestures hocket from non-quarter tone to quarter tone figures quite rapidly and the sound transforms through their resonance.

These points are not ambiguous or solitary, however; they lead to structured resonance in returning motives that themselves evolve. This process goes to the fore until the entire structure topples on its head and breaks, bringing nearly all elements to a brilliant melange of sound and color.

*Resistance* is a shout contained within a whisper and a whisper within a shout. Solidarity and truth remain at the core of any resistance with the purposeful seeking of unified equity despite margins and odds. So too is Yotam Haber's own *Resistance* portraying a saxophonist at odds with himself, defying limits in the pursuit of the ever-present truth no matter the numerous obstacles in its way.  
(Program notes by Don-Paul Kahl)

# CHOREF/ חורף

(2020)

Where words end, my music begins, and the myriad of possible extramusical meanings the work can have often comes to me after I have begun the voyage of the work, or sometimes even on its completion. *Choref*, which means “winter” in Hebrew, is a piece commissioned by the marvelous American Wild Ensemble. It continues a cycle of works (*Bloodsnow*, and most recently *Bremner* [2023]) that explore my experiences in Alaska, including the trauma of severing my finger on the Denali Highway while dog sledding in 2018, and my week of hiking in the pristine glacial wilderness of Wrangell-St. Elias in 2022. *Choref* is a short work about the great paradox of winter: its stillness belying the immensity of rushing life. As in many of my compositions, I begin  
6 (and possibly end!) with a musical *problem* that I attempt to solve.

## TALEA ENSEMBLE

Recipients of the 2014 Chamber Music America/ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming, Talea Ensemble has brought to life more than 30 commissions of major new works since it was founded in 2008. It has helped introduce NYC audiences to important works of such esteemed composers as Pierre Boulez, Georg Friedrich Haas, Beat Furrer, Pierluigi Billone, or Georges Aperghis.

Recent festival engagements include performances at Lincoln Center Festival, Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt, the Fromm Concerts at Harvard University, Warsaw Autumn Festival, Wien Modern, Chicago's Contempo series, Royaumont Voix Nouvelles, Vancouver New Music, and many others. Talea assumes an ongoing role in supporting a new generation of composers, and has undertaken residencies in music departments at Columbia, Harvard, Stanford, Cornell, New York University, and many others.

## AMERICAN WILD ENSEMBLE

The American Wild Ensemble's *Music in the American Wild* initiative began in 2016 with a performance tour of American national parks in honor of the National Park Service centennial. Since our initial tours performing in unconventional venues, from caves to mountaintops, American Wild Ensemble has continued to celebrate American places, historic figures, and events by commissioning new works and performing them in site-inspired and site-specific locations.

## TAYLOR WARD

Bass-baritone John Taylor Ward performs regularly with the world's finest baroque musicians and ensembles. In 2016, he was featured in the US premiere of Claude Vivier's *Kopernikus*, directed by Peter Sellars at the Ojai Festival, and he began a series of recitals at Joe's Pub with Cantata Profana. In 2017 he made his debuts at the Salzburg, Berlin, and Luzerne Festspiele. Taylor holds a BM from the Eastman School of Music and an MMA from Yale School of Music; he is the founding Associate Artistic Director of the Lakes Area Music Festival, an Associate Artist of Heartbeat Opera, and an avid Sacred Harp singer.

## DON-PAUL KAHL

Saxophonist Don-Paul Kahl has performed throughout Europe, the United States, Australia, and South-East Asia. An ardent supporter and advocate of contemporary and modern music, Don-Paul has been involved in the creation and performance of over 100 new works for saxophone by some of the most talented and award-winning young composers of our time. He earned a Master of Music degree from the University of Florida and a Bachelor of Music degree from Susquehanna University. He is currently a doctoral candidate for the PhD in Artistic Research in collaboration with Leiden University (NL) and the Orpheus Institute (BE).

# PERFORMERS

# YOTAM HABER



Yotam Haber was born in Holland and grew up in Israel, Nigeria, and Milwaukee. He is a recipient of a 2022 commission from Chamber Music America, the winner of the 2022 Third Annual Henri Lazarof International Commission Prize, the winner of the 2021 Benjamin Hadley Danks Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the 2020 Azrieli Music Prize, a 2017 Koussevitzky Commission for the Library of Congress, a 2013 Fromm Music Foundation commission, a 2013 NYFA award, the 2008 Rome Prize, and a 2005 John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship. In 2015, Haber's first monographic album of chamber music, *Torus* (Naxos), was hailed by New York's WQXR as "a snapshot of a soul in flux – moving from life to the afterlife, from Israel to New Orleans – a composer looking for a sound and finding something powerful along the way."

Haber is Associate Professor of Composition at UMKC Conservatory, and Artistic Director Emeritus of MATA. He is a Fulbright Distinguished Senior Fellow in 2023–24 at the Jerusalem Academy. His music is published by RAI Trade