



Barnswallow

SUMMER 2022



August

Mary Oliver, 1993

When the blackberries hang
swollen in the woods, in the brambles
nobody owns, I spend

all day among the high
branches, reaching
my ripped arms, thinking

of nothing, cramming
the black honey of summer
into my mouth; all day my body

accepts what it is. In the dark
creeks that run by there is
this thick paw of my life darting among

the black bells, the leaves; there is
this happy tongue.

~

We don't know if Oliver's poem (written decades after a fateful day at Steepletop in the summer of 1959, when, returning from her daily wanderings, she entered Norma's kitchen and fell instantly in love with photographer Molly Malone Cook) was inspired by that memory or not.

That said, this place that Vincent called a paradise is a marvel to behold as Spring's drab grays and muddy browns give way to the brilliant emeralds and blazing scarlets of Summer. August heralds the end of the season in all of its sultry glory, as colors fade into gold under the shimmering sun.

2022 has been a busy one so far. We have welcomed 28 Artists-in-Residence, whose long hours in the studio are bookended by Berkshire Mountain Bakery croissants, Poetry Trail wanderings, Harvey Mountain hikes, Chef Donna's delicious suppers, vibrant sunsets, thundering storms and glowing fireflies.

Of these 28, one-third are from or were born in other countries, including Albania, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Pakistan, Singapore, South Korea and Spain.

This issue focuses on a few of these international participants, in addition to a new feature highlighting what our alumni are up to after they bid farewell.

* SAVE THE DATE *

50th Anniversary Alumni Weekend Reunion @ Steepletop

SEPTEMBER 23-24, 2023

Alumni Happenings

Ximena Velasco

CHILE, VISUAL ARTS



At Millay I worked on a series of paintings that were based on photographs I took of Vincent's pool. I was fascinated by her story and it seemed to be one of the spots that concentrated the highest amount of her energy. I observed and photographed the aquatic plants and frogs living there, and then transferred their abstract patterns onto paper and canvas by tracing them. This procedure was done in a meditative and almost mechanical way. At this stage the work became intuitive, but somehow I felt that I was transferring Vincent's vigor into my drawings.

I also worked on a large drawing that emerged from the imprint of a piece of bark found in the Poetry Trail, where Vincent and her family are buried, and where one can walk and read some of her poems. On one of my many daily morning runs I selected the piece and carried it back to the studio. It had beautiful lines that revealed the passage of time and it smelled like the woods. I made an imprint with it on two large pieces of paper, and worked up from there, again intuitively. The drawing somehow came out bold, simple and strategically set.

My stay at Millay was not only inspirational but also magnificent in terms of the connections I made with other residents. Our daily dinner ritual at six thirty on the dot was the beginning of lovely friendships. The cohort was exceptionally diverse in terms of backgrounds and age, and somehow that made it even more appealing. Korea, Spain, Albania, Washington, Brooklyn, and Chile is not a bad combination.

I especially connected with Ani, a writer from Albania, whose story of immigration to the US had certain coincidences with mine. We went running together every morning surrounded by gorgeous woods, shared breakfast, and talked endlessly about life. I learned that a writers' journey has many coincidences with that of a painter, and that work processes are similar. Interdisciplinary residencies are certainly a powerful way of elevating motivation and are eye opening in terms of mirroring work systems.



My art practice develops from images related to natural phenomena and at the same time plays with fractal geometry. I have been fascinated with certain patterns and the geometry that is ever-present and repetitive in nature. The way certain constructions and patterns such as botanical structures and systems of blood vessels are echoed on such different scales has fascinated me and served as an infinite source of inspiration. The manner I construct images initially comes from observation in a controlled way, but at times, it is related to a type of automatic drawing that is generated in an intuitive and meditative manner.

I have been able to build a type of alphabet that is transformable according to each piece. Initially, images of stones, branches and seaweed served as a stepping-stone and I worked their shapes into drawings until they acquired an identity of their own. I have also worked with the shapes of cells, bacteria

and other microorganisms. You could say my work is a mix of biology and botany and the intersections between micro and macro. I am interested in these structures and their permanent coincidences with the shapes and structures of our own bodies.



I compose my paintings and drawings in a way that mimics natural processes, and plays with interconnections between the concepts of abstraction and figuration, and the visible and invisible. Recently I have incorporated constructions that reveal my interest in architecture and geometric abstraction. In addition, the relativity of color and the ongoing research on multiple color combinations sustained in Josef Alber's color theory are always present in my practice.

My work is primarily bi-dimensional, and I utilize paint, graphite, and collage, often on canvas, paper or aluminum, and the process is generally composed of a layering of drawings, marks and abstract structures set in different orders. I have also experimented escaping the barriers of paper and canvas by drawing directly on the wall.

[Learn more >>](#)

Ani Gjika

ALBANIA, WRITER / TRANSLATOR

In the Andes, there's a group of people who speak the Aymara language and think of time so differently from the rest of us. For the Aymara people, the future, "qhipa pacha/timpu," translates as "back" or "behind time" and the past, "nayra pacha/timpu," as "front time," meaning that the past always sits in front of us because we always think about where we



come from, what we've done. But the future is behind us, unknown to us, we can't foresee.

Growing up in Albania in the '80s, I saw so many people who had no present. People were their pasts, forever.

Even when you were unknown, someone would go and dig something up from your past and that defined you, for the rest of your life. You couldn't achieve anything anymore. How did people even dream then? You were locked in this box of "what you'd done." Branded. How did someone love somebody then? When people's presence is stolen from them, they are already dead. I know too that when you think or worry too much about the future, you miss out on seeing who you are and what you have right now.

"Alright, I should go," T says one morning after he'd said it a few times but hadn't been able to get out of bed.

We finally get up and I walk him over to the living room. We stand there for a moment and he puts his arms around me, but soon he kisses my neck already and I'm kissing his, our heads dancing very slowly, forehead to cheek, forehead to forehead, our hands begin to travel like trains without locomotives, they go anywhere. Behind me, on the wall, I'm aware of Gustav Klimt's "The Kiss" hanging, perhaps eyeing us, except I don't fall on my knees. I'm standing right in the middle of my living room with him standing before me, the morning light completely stunned around us. For an eternal moment, we're the only gods alive in the world. He pulls my sleeping shirt down and my right breast rises out. He kisses it or tries to gulp it or both. Then he pulls my shirt up but doesn't take it off and bends to nibble on my left nipple as I bite his shoulder then his chest and start to lift his shirt though I don't take it off either. He moves his hands to unzip his pants, but his hands don't know how to follow through and we're breathing like trains down a valley. I unzip him and as I lower his pants my mouth draws a perfect invisible line vertically down to the source of what made him come here last night and as the rest of me follows my mouth he pulls my shirt over my head. I rise again and kiss him on the mouth and then I lower my own pants. They fall on the floor with my undies — prayers that go nowhere. We're standing in the room naked and nothing could detach me from this. He takes me back to the bedroom where the murmur of our bodies falls and rises on the bed by its own design the way his mouth suddenly falls right in between my legs and then rises into my own mouth. We are too good

at this.

Excerpted from By Its Right Name, forthcoming 2023 Restless Books Press.

[Learn more >>](#)

Daniel (Danny) Tejera

SPAIN, PLAYWRIGHT



This play is set in a grimy garage in Madrid, and this scene happens towards the end of the first act. In it, JUAN and ANDREA, long-time friends, have sex! They've never done this before, despite knowing each other for a long time. The reason this happens is: TORO, their other friend, just moved back to Madrid. He and Andrea started hitting it off, and Juan felt threatened by this.

When Toro is sent on a coke mission, Juan makes a move on Andrea. Also, for context: there was recently a spill on Juan's DJ equipment. Hence "sound mixer in the rice." Also, for context, there is a middle-aged man playing a dog, TICA, sleeping or dying in the corner.

(Toro leaves. Beat. Andrea texts. Juan stares at Andrea. Andrea looks up, sees Juan staring at her.)

ANDREA: What?

JUAN: Nothing...nothing...

(They stare at each other. Juan sniffs the air.)

JUAN: Do you smell that?

ANDREA: Did you fart?

JUAN: No... It kind of smells... like love is in the air.

ANDREA: What?

JUAN (makes a suggestive face)

ANDREA: What is wrong with you?

JUAN: What is wrong with me?

ANDREA: You are a very strange man, Juan.

JUAN: Hm. How very convenient for you.

ANDREA: ... Is there anything I can help you with?

JUAN: "Hm. I don't know. Is there?"

(Andrea looks at him, confused.)

JUAN (still in whatever voice he's doing.) : "I'm going to go check on the sound mixer in the rice."

ANDREA: Okay. You Do That.

(Juan leaves into the house. Andrea stands there, confused. Then Juan returns. He stands in front of the door. He walks over to her. He gets very very close. He stands in front of her without touching her. It's somewhere between intimate and weird.)

ANDREA: Oh... Seriously?

(Juan and Andrea kiss. They kiss a lot. Then they do an abstract sex dance. It looks nothing like real sex. Maybe it looks like that game where you have to mirror what the person in front of you is doing. Music from the laptop continues to play, but there's no other special sound or light cue. They're just abstractly dancing. It goes on for a while. At some point during this time, Tica walks around the room, thinking, "Where did everybody go? I'm a dog. Where did everybody go?" Then she returns to her corner. The sex is over. They return to opposite parts of the room, in silence, Juan to his DJ set, Andrea to the porch furniture. They laugh.)

ANDREA: That was unexpected.

*Scene from the 2020 workshop production
at the University of Texas New Theater
(UTNT) Festival, featuring Sarah Knight and
Jeffrey Gan.*



[Learn more >>](#)

Nur Nasreen Ibrahim

PAKISTAN, WRITER / PRODUCER

ASIAN AMERICAN WRITERS WORKSHOP MARGINS FELLOW



Wires crisscross the horizon like scratches of ink against old paper. The high-rises around my building shiver under the glow and cast the interior of the city in shadow. They didn't exist two decades ago, when smaller towers and construction projects littered the city landscape. The brighter, newer Pakistan for the ones newly flush with cash. A Pakistan that could patch up shoddy construction with another quick paint job before it collapsed on the next fool who got taken in by real estate mafias looking to make quick money and move on.

Even the sun in Karachi is tired, though it is the same sun beating down upon Lahore. Romantics foolishly say that even if one were separated from the beloved at least they would know that they are sitting under the same sun, the same sky, watching the same stars at night. But it is impossible to imagine that Lahore and Karachi share this sun. In one city she rules the sky and earth as a terrifying empress, in the other, she hangs weak and listless, as beaten down as the people under her watch.

[Learn more >>](#)

Jung Hae Chae

SOUTH KOREA, POETRY



Language Acquisition

Everything in the world began with a yes.
—Clarice Lispector, "Hour of the Star"

isn't what comes
but the way it comes into.

It's the way

of girls' schoolyard whispers,

the sway of their lean necks keening into
their desires quietly churning into night.

It

It's the crushing of crinoline,
the wringing of cracked hands into

their starch-hardened hearts—

the way of girls into
women—a slow wintering

that consoles even as it leaves
a wedge in its wake.

Women are talking.

They're talking about the way
their days fill with toil and seasons

and heartbreaks,
and how that feels.

Breaths quickened against hard wind.

Fresh against the day's trauma, they go on
weaving their tales of survival,

taking the night away with them.

They gather word after word,
praying into their last,

as if they'd been waiting their whole lives
for one meaning. Into

the sheath of comeliness
comes kunta come morning, a slit-

full of utterance before waking—
a language of reckoning

giving way to a noosed heart. Against
the pitchfork of silence they wake

to the sound of their pain
become mother become wild-

haired-forest. They wake
to hear the strange fruit

ripening quietly in the dark.

[Learn more >>](#)

Gaia Petrelli Wilmer

BRAZIL, COMPOSER

Millay was my first artistic residency - and I loved it!

Having the space - in my calendar, in my mind, and the beautiful physical space of Millay - to focus on writing music was wonderful. But not only that... Writing music and being productive was amazing but the place and the people where also deeply so amazing and touching that I feel like I made friends for life.



Spending time together every day while also having my own privacy and internal space to work was perfect! Want to go back every year!

The project I worked on while I was there is going to be recorded at the end of this month and is probably during the Spring of 2023. It is a 10-piece band playing my arrangements of Caetano Veloso's music, Brazilian singer and songwriter who I deeply admire and is turning 80 years old this year.

Other than that, I look forward to coming back to the US in the beginning of 2023 to release another project of mine, a large ensemble record paying homage to Brazilian composer, Egberto Gismonti. The record is coming out with Sunnyside Records and the release concert will happen on January 13th at Dizzy's Club at Lincoln Center.



[Learn more >>](#)

Fountain of You

A NEW MUSICAL BY
FAYE CHAIO + TASHA GORDON-SOLOMON



Our work as musical theater writing team is defined by our love of story and desire to bring the voices and perspectives of women front and center. We aim to re-imagine form, and to approach familiar narratives from a new, feminist perspectives. We tell stories about strong and complicated female characters. They behave badly. They are flawed. Our work blends the serious and the silly by using forms both classic and contemporary. We believe comedy has the power to shift an audience's perspective and challenge their assumptions. Our hope is that our work will open up a space for audiences to question what we take as givens in our world.

Our musical, *Fountain of You*, is an irreverent, feminist chamber musical that satirizes our society's preoccupation with youth, beauty and money, and the raging gender inequities underlying it all. We did not set out to write this musical. It was born from a place of anger and fear and frustration around how much women still have to fight for and justify their place in society and the world at large.

A century after winning the vote, women make eighty percent of their male counterparts, while being held to unattainable and subjugating beauty standards. The preoccupation with youth and appearance, the pay gap, the unequal treatment of women in the workplace, the wave of sexual harassment revelations—this piece is a response to it all in—in the form of a musical comedy.



Kristen, is a soap opera actress, who is perfectly happy with her life, until everything changes on the eve of her thirty-something-th birthday. The clock strikes twelve and suddenly her party clears out, she is fired from the show she's starred in for a decade, and can't book a new role to save her life—because she's too old. After desperate attempts to resuscitate her career don't work, she undergoes an extreme plastic surgery procedure that promises to turn her life around. What follows is one woman's quest to obtain power and settle the score—at a cost.

FEATURING

Jenni Barber

(Wicked, The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee)

Jason Veasey

(Strange Loop, The Lion King)

Kate Rockwell

(Mean Girls, Bring it On The Musical)

Maya Days

(Rent, Aida)

7pm Monday September 26th

The Green Room 42

570 Tenth Avenue, NYC

[Order your tickets >>](#)



We are both hybrid artists: Tasha is a playwright, librettist, director; Faye is a composer, performer, and musician. We develop our work in a collaborative way; a large part of our process involves playing through the songs and scenes, based on the outline and research we have. It is important for us to create a spirit of fun in our work, and as we work, so that we can communicate that spirit of fun with the audience. We believe that in silliness, there is transgression.

Image: Tasha and Faye in residence at Millay Arts, 2019

Contratulations



Žibuoklė Martinaitytė

**NATIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR
GITANAS NAUSĖDA, PRESIDENT OF LITHUANIA**



During my residency at Millay, I felt inspired not only by the surrounding natural beauty and quiet, but also by the mysterious presence of Edna St. Vincent Millay that is somehow palpable at the property.

The presence of this powerful and creative woman gave me confidence in my own creative potential. In those years when I hadn't established myself as a successful composer yet, it was very important to just keep active at my creative practice despite anything.

Being at this residency was one of the validations that helped me to endure on my chosen path. It got so much easier in later years when things started happening - CD releases, multiple performances, awards etc.

At the Millay residency I was composing a piece for bass clarinet, cello and piano called Gridlock. The piece was later premiered in New York City by the [TRANSIT ensemble](#).

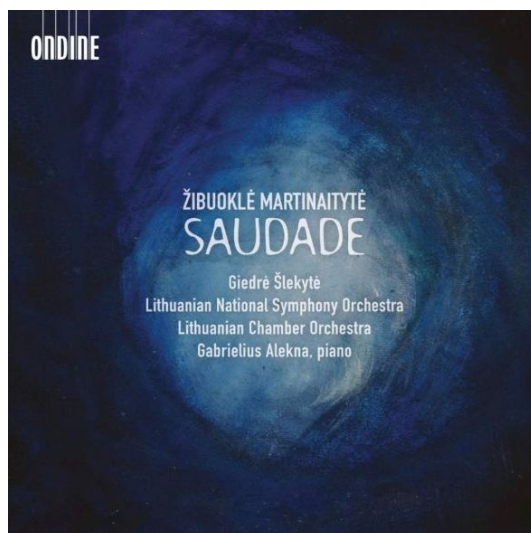
GRIDLOCK Žibuoklė Martinaitytė

Part I

In free rhythm. With concentrated inner intensity and determination *senza tempo ca. = 40"*

Clarinet in Bb
Violoncello
Piano
Cl.in B
Vc.
Pno.

Following her 2021 critically-acclaimed release, [Saudade](#) (one of NPR's [Top 10 Classical Albums](#) of 2021), Žibuoklė's much anticipated latest release [Ex Tenebris Lux](#) received its world premiere in June 2022 in Vilnius with the Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra.



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Our mailing address is:

454 East Hill Road, PO Box 3
Austerlitz, New York 12017
518.392.4144

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