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The Indian Parrot AND OTHER STORIES

THE MUSIC OF W.A.MATHIEU
 FEATURING THOMAS BUCKNER (BARITONE), JOSEPH KUBERA (PIANO)

A PARROT, THREE FISH, AND A DONKEY

Teaching stories of Jelaluddin Rumi for three singers and small ensemble
 Translation by Coleman Barks. Stage adaptation by Paul Sills.

DEVI MATHIEU, soprano; SUZANNE ELDER-WALLACE, alto;
 THOMAS BUCKNER, baritone; BOB AFIFI, alto flute;
 SHIRA KAMMEN, viola; DANIEL KENNEDY, frame drums;
 JOSEPH KUBERA, piano

GOURD MUSIC

JOSEPH KUBERA, piano

THE BLIND BEEKEEPER

A miracle play by Daniel Moore for baritone and piano.

THOMAS BUCKNER, baritone
 JOSEPH KUBERA, piano

mutablemusic

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MUTABLE 17524-2 THE INDIAN PARROT - THE MUSIC OF W.A.MATHIEU

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WILLIAM ALLAUDIN MATHIEU is a pianist, composer, teacher, recording artist, and author. He has composed a variety of chamber and choral works and made numerous solo piano recordings. Allaudin has written three books on music, *The Listening Book* and *The Musical Life*, published by Shambhala, and *Harmonic Experience: Tonal Harmony from Its Natural Origins to Its Modern Expression*, published by Inner Traditions. He currently performs with singer Devi Mathieu and string player Shira Kammen in *Ephemeros*, a San Francisco Bay Area trio dedicated to the performance of early and contemporary music. Allaudin was a disciple of North Indian vocalist Pandit Pran Nath for 25 years. He studied African music with Nubian musician Hamza El Din, jazz with William Russo, and European classical music with Easley Blackwood. In the 1960s, Allaudin spent several years as an arranger/composer for Stan Kenton and Duke Ellington, was the musical director for the *Second City Theater* in Chicago (which he helped found) and the *Committee Theater* in San Francisco. In the 1970s, he served on the faculties of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and Mills College. In 1969 he founded the *Sufi Choir*, which he directed until 1982. The last two decades have been devoted to composition, performance, and teaching from his home in Sebastopol, California. For more information, including a list of available recordings, visit ColdMountainMusic.com

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A Parrot, Three Fish, and a Donkey

TEACHING STORIES OF JELALUDDIN RUMI FOR THREE SINGERS AND SMALL ENSEMBLE. TRANSLATION BY COLEMAN BARKS. STAGE ADAPTATION BY PAUL SILLS.

Currently Jelaluddin Rumi is the best-selling poet in Afghanistan, where he was born, and in the United States, where his revival owes much of its strength to the luminous translations of Coleman Barks. For seven centuries Rumi has given his readers the sense that they could come closer to what they were looking for in themselves and beyond themselves. His poems are soaked in the feeling of the sacredness of everyday life. He is of the spirit and of the street, with many modes of sobriety and hilarity. His comic modes, to quote Mr. Barks, “involve a breaking open in moments of greatest vulnerability... We should remember that these stories are not primarily about people but, but about *impulses* within people... The animals are always themselves, very froggy, and cocky, and doggy, even as they serve as symbols for the *nafs*, the energies that bind us at various stages of our growth. Rumi’s world is a tangle of creatures in a Cosmic Play... of evolving consciousness.”

Several years ago, director Paul Sills had the idea of mounting an evening of Rumi teaching stories for Story Theater, a troupe whose actors,

trained in techniques of trust and spontaneity, simultaneously narrate stories and play characters. While helping with these productions I had the idea of composing a more music-focused presentation using three of Mr. Sills’ adaptations plus a favorite Rumi poem, “Where Everything Is Music”, as a kind of benediction for the stories. When Tom Buckner asked for a piece, the sound of the whole cycle, including the instrumentation, fell into place.

A Parrot, Three Fish, and a Donkey is a modern piece with a medieval text, and medieval sensibilities have worked their way into the musical fabric: the small percussion instruments, the instrumental range lying (for the most part) within the range of the human voice, and, most of all, the harmony, which is a kind of modulating modality. Inspired by the universality of Rumi’s poems, I felt especially free in this piece to borrow from many centuries of Eastern and Western harmonic practice.

It’s generally my feeling that, in setting text, *text rules*. Every aspect of the music—*tesitura*, harmony, melodic and rhythmic content, everything—must serve to clarify the meaning of the words. Using almost no melisma, and emphasizing melodic lines appropriate to speech patterns, I’ve tried to compose music that best allows the stories to be told. *W. A. Mathieu*

THE INDIAN PARROT

Merchant (*Baritone*)

There was a merchant setting out for India.
He asked each male and female servant
what they wanted to be brought as a gift.
Each described a different exotic object.

Servant (*Alto*)

A piece of silk.

Servant (*Soprano*)

A brass figurine.

Servant (*Alto*)

A pearl necklace.

Merchant (*Baritone*)

Then he asked his beautiful caged parrot.
The one with such a lovely voice.

Parrot (*Soprano*)

When you see the Indian parrots, describe
my cage.

Say that I need guidance here in my
separation from them.

Ask how our friendship can continue with
me so confined
and *them* flying about freely in the
meadow mist.

Tell them I remember well our mornings
moving together from tree to tree.

Tell them to drink one cup of ecstatic wine
in honor of me here in the dregs of my life.

Tell them that the sound of their quarreling
High in the trees would be sweeter to hear
than any music.

Merchant (*Baritone*)

The merchant listened carefully to her
message.
When he reached India, he saw a field full
of parrots.
He stopped and called out what she had
told him.

A Parrot (*Alto*)

One of the nearest parrots shivered and
stiffened
and fell down dead.

Merchant (*Baritone*)

This one is surely kin to my parrot.
I shouldn't have spoken.

He finished his trading and returned home
with presents for his workers.

When he got to the parrot,
she demanded her gift.

Parrot (*soprano*)

What happened when you told my story
to the Indian parrots?

Merchant (*Baritone*)

I'm afraid to say.

Parrot (*Soprano*)

Master, you must!

Merchant (*Baritone*)

When I spoke your complaints to a field
of chattering parrots,
It broke the heart of one of them.
She must have been your close companion,

or a relative,
for when she heard about you she grew quiet
and trembled, and died.

Parrot (*Soprano*)

As the caged parrot heard this,
she herself quivered and sank
to the cage floor.

Merchant (*Baritone*)

The merchant was a good man.
He grieved deeply for his parrot,
murmuring distracted phrases, self-contradictory—
cold, then loving—clear, then murky with symbolism.
When the merchant threw the dead parrot...

Merchant and Parrot (*Baritone and Soprano*)

out of the cage...

Parrot (*Soprano*)

she spread her wings and glided to a nearby tree!

Servant (*Alto*)

The merchant suddenly understood the mystery.

Merchant (*Baritone*)

Tell me, sweet singer,
what it was in your friend's message that taught you this trick?

Parrot (*Soprano*)

My friend told me it was the charm of my voice
that kept me caged.

Servant (*Alto*)

She told him one or two more spiritual truths,
and then a tender good-bye.

Trio:

Goodbye! Goodbye!

Merchant (*Baritone*)

May God protect you as you go.
I hope to follow you.





THE THREE FISH

Fish Three (*Baritone*)

This is the story of the lake and the three big fish that were in it,

Fish One (*Alto*)

one of them intelligent,

Fish Two (*Soprano*)

another half-intelligent,

Fish Three (*Baritone*)

and the third stupid.

Fishermen (*Soprano*)

Some fishermen came to the edge of the lake with their nets.

Fish Three (*Baritone*)

The three fish saw them.

Fish One (*Alto*)

The intelligent fish decided at once to leave,
to make the long, difficult trip to the ocean.

She thought, I won't consult the other two on this.


They will only weaken my resolve,
because they love this place so.
They call it home.

Their ignorance will keep them here.

It's right to love your home place,
but first ask, Where is that, really?
I'm leaving.

Sometimes there's no one to talk to.
You must just set out on your own.

So the intelligent fish made her whole length
a moving footprint and, like a deer the dogs chase,
she suffered greatly on her way,
but finally made it to the edgeless safety of the ocean.



Fish Two (*Soprano*)

The half-intelligent fish thought,
My guide has gone.
I ought to have gone with her, but I didn't.
And now I've lost my chance to escape.
I wish I'd gone with her.

Don't regret what's happened.
If it's in the past, let it go.
Don't even remember it!

I'll belly up to the surface and float like
weeds float,
just giving myself totally to the water.
To die before I die, as the Prophet said to.

So she did that.
She bobbed up and down, helpless,
within arm's reach of the fishermen.

Fisherman One (*Baritone*)

Look at this!
The best and biggest fish is dead!

Fisherman Two (*Baritone*)

One of the men lifted her by the tail,
Spat on her, and threw her onto high ground.

Fish Two (*Soprano*)

She rolled over and over,
down and down, and slid secretly
near the water, back in,
and away.

Fish Three (*Baritone*)

Meanwhile, the third fish, the dumb one,
was agitatedly jumping about,
trying to escape
with his agility and cleverness.
The net, of course,
finally closed around him,
and as he lay in the terrible frying-pan bed,
he thought,

If I get out of this,
I'll never live again in the limits of a lake.
Next time, the ocean!
I'll make the infinite my home!
Next time, the ocean!
The infinite!



A SONG ABOUT A DONKEY

Wanderer (*Baritone*)

A wandering Sufi was traveling with
his donkey...

Servant (*Soprano*)

...and his servant...

Sufi (*Alto*)

...to a community of Sufis who were
very poor.

They greeted him warmly,
took his donkey
and led it to the stable
where they fed it and gave it water.

Wanderer (*Baritone*)

The wandering Sufi...

Servant (*Soprano*)

...and his servant...

Wanderer (*Baritone*)

...went inside.

Sufi (*Alto*)

Immediately, a group of the resident
Sufis
sold the donkey,
and they bought food and candles
for a feast.

There was jubilation in the mo-
nastery!

No more patience, no more three-
day fasting!

Wanderer (*Baritone*)

The traveler joined in the festivities.
They paid constant attention to him,
caressing him,
honoring him.
Then the Sema began.

(prayers are sung)

(Soprano)

There was smoke from the kitchen,
(Alto)

dust from the feet hitting the floor,

(Soprano)

and ecstasy from the longing of the
dancers.

(Baritone)

Their hands were waving.

(Soprano)

Their foreheads swept low across
the dais.

(Alto)

It had been a long wait for such an
occasion.

(Soprano)

As the Sema ran its course,
a poet began to sing a deep-grief song.

(Alto)

Your donkey is gone.
Your donkey is gone my son.
Your donkey is gone.

(Soprano)

Everyone joined in,
clapping their hands
and singing over and over,
your donkey is gone.

(Baritone and Soprano)

My son, your donkey is gone.

(Alto)

And the visiting Sufi sang
more passionately
than all the rest,

Wanderer *(Baritone)*

Your donkey is gone,
my son, your donkey is gone!
Your donkey, your donkey is gone!
(end of prayers)

Sufi *(Alto)*

Finally it was dawn,
and they parted with many goodbyes.
The banquet room was empty.

Wanderer *(Baritone)*

The man brought out his baggage
and called to his servant,
Where's my donkey?

Servant *(Soprano)*

Look at you!

Wanderer *(Baritone)*

What do you mean?

Servant *(Soprano)*

They sold your donkey.
That's how we had such a celebration!

Wanderer *(Baritone)*

Why didn't you come and tell me?

Servant *(Soprano)*

Several times I came near,
but you were always singing so loudly,
'Your donkey's gone, your donkey's
gone,'

I thought you had some secret insight.

Wanderer *(Baritone)*

Yes.
Now I do.
I tried to imitate these monks,
and it was my imitation of their
spiritual joy
that caused my loss.
It came from my desire to be honored.

(Soprano and Alto)

It deafened him to what was being
so constantly said.

(Alto)

Remember,
there's only one reason to do anything:

(Ensemble)

A meeting with the Friend.

WHERE EVERYTHING IS MUSIC

Don't worry about saving these songs.
If one of our instruments breaks, it doesn't matter.

We have fallen into the place
where everything is music.
The strumming and the flute notes
rise into the atmosphere;
even if the whole world's harp
should burn up, there will still be
hidden instruments playing.

If the candle flickers and goes out,
we still have a piece of flint, and a spark.

This singing is sea foam.

The graceful movements come from a pearl
somewhere on the ocean floor.
Poems reach up like spindrift and the edge
of driftwood along the beach, wanting!
They derive
From a slow and powerful root
that we can't see.

Stop the words now.
Open the windows in the center of your chest,
and let the spirits fly in and out.



All poems are freely adapted from Coleman Barks' translations and are used with his permission. The print version of *The Indian Parrot* appears in *One-Handed Basket Weaving* (Maypop); the other three are published most recently in *The Essential Rumi* (Harper San Francisco).

Gourds have a fond place in my heart. When used in the design of musical instruments, they provide a resonant space that amplifies the sound and reminds you of hollow, growing things. Two instruments whose voices rely on gourds have changed my musical life: the tamboura of India and the mbira of Africa.

A tamboura is a long-necked instrument with large gourd resonator, strung with four strings and used for the ever-present drone of Indian music. Indian music has taught me the harmonic (and melodic) essence of modal and tonal music, even such music played on a piano in equal-tempered (modern) tuning. For 25 years I had the golden opportunity of studying North Indian vocal music with Pandit Pran Nath, one of the greatest performers and teachers of the Kirana school, a style that enters into the deepest mysteries of singing in tune. Living inside the sound of my tamboura for decades has given me a sense of the vast harmonic theater that arises from a resonant drone. When combined with the modulatory practices of European music, the result is “modal modulation”, which is at the core of my harmonic style. It is interesting to note that Eastern European and Russian composers (like Bartók and Shostakovich) are especially connected to the long history of music indigenous to their cultures, and have been devel-

oping personal styles of modal modulation for over a century.

The other gourd of my heart amplifies the African mbira. Mbiras, which are played recessed within the cavity of a large gourd, are thought of by some westerners as a kind of hand-held piano—indeed we have named them “thumb pianos”. I sometimes think of my piano as a large mbira with the sound-box acting as a giant gourd: a grand mbiano.

African music, especially the Shona *mbira* music of Zimbabwe, has taught me harmonic cross-rhythms and their ecstatic sense of suspended time. The cross-rhythms of Shona *mbira* music arise from repeated figures of 12, 16, 24, or 48 notes that are grouped into fours by their harmonic configuration, but accented in threes, creating two layers of music that are independent yet intertwined. The downbeats of the layers, each of which have separate rhythmic identities, do not coincide, so that two sets of dancers, for instance, never share a “one”. This is true of much African percussion music, but the distinguishing factor in Shona music is that the music is also harmonic: there are, in essence, two interlocking sets of chord changes, one that emerges as you follow the four-tone groupings (with the help of a strongly delineated bass), and another that is perceived as you follow the three-tone

groupings (which are heavily accented). So how does one listen? In a suspended state, so that everything is true at once. Such passages are hinted at often in *Gourd Music*, for instance in track 6 from 1:28 and from 5:28 to the end of Movement 2. An especially long passage is developed in track 8 from 5:06 to the end of the piece.

Gourd Music is also available in an earlier, sparkling recording by pianist Kirk Whipple (*W. A. Mathieu – Three Compositions for Piano*, Cold Mountain Music CD21). Both versions are most excellent, and, according to the composer (me), “authentic.” For listeners who find they own both albums, the interpretive contrasts are fascinating. *W. A. Mathieu*

The Blind Beekeeper

**A MIRACLE PLAY BY DANIEL MOORE FOR
BARITONE AND PIANO.**

.....
Tom Buckner and I have been collaborating on one musical form or another since the late 1960s when we began, at The San Francisco Conservatory, an improvisational group called The Ghost Opera. Early on I recognized Tom's gift for narrative, the way he brings enthusiasm and intelligence to even the simplest tales, whether he is reading an epic poem or recounting a shopping incident. Musically, we experimented with singing stories in spontaneously invented languages, which generates a kind of hidden, or ghost narrative, different for each listener. For many years, however, I wanted to through-compose something in English for Tom that would highlight his talent for story-telling, and when he showed me Daniel Abdal-Hayy Moore's *The*

Blind Beekeeper, I knew we'd found the right text. I like it because it is a wonderful poem, but I like it especially because it asks the soloist-narrator to simultaneously play so many roles. His first line is spoken: "I'd like to make a movie called *The Blind Beekeeper*..." and from then on he is above all a movie pitch-man -- and we are producer-angels deciding if we are going to invest in this guy's nutty movie. But he is also telling a dramatic and compelling story, empathizing with a diverse array of characters. And, since (at least in live performance) he will lead an audience of angels in transformative acts of bee-participation, he becomes our conductor as well. Finally, of course, he's a concert baritone giving a performance of a contemporary art song, a circumstance true even for the most post-modern of us.

The piece is divided along the lines of a

THE BLIND BEEKEEPER

1

(spoken): I'd like to make a movie called
"The Blind Beekeeper."

(overture)

(sung): Black and white, 1919.

Henry, a teenager on his family farm,
is blinded by sparks from a forge.

Now we dissolve to 1943, in Technicolor.
Henry is walking slowly
toward his white wooden bee sanctuaries.
He's wearing no protective suit or headdress;
he's stripped to the waist!

Henry knows the mental workings of bees,
he can call them individually by name.
They swarm onto him,
they cover his torso.
His face is wreathed in smiles.
He does the dance of the bee
with bees all over him, a bee pin cushion,
this man against a green field
on a sunny Kansas afternoon.

The camera rises
in a spectacular crane shot
of Henry shrinking smaller and smaller,
black with bees,
his voice on the soundtrack
calling each one by name:
Zuz, Zee, Zan, Zy...

standard three-reeler: In the expository first reel (parts 1 and 2 of the text), we see Henry's history and very special talent; then we are inside the hive, and meet the bee protagonists. The second reel (part 3) is all action and adventure: the lover-bees get into serious trouble. The third reel (parts 4 and 5) is the triumphal rescue and final celebration. By the end we have seen a bee-movie about very small events as well as very large ones. Like a good children's story, it is at the same time a slightly silly tale and a noble miracle play. I have had to slightly scale down the sung text of *The Blind Beekeeper* for musical purposes; the original is a little longer, and makes terrific reading. If you ever have the opportunity to hear Daniel Abdal-Hayy Moore in the spoken version, preferably live, don't miss it.

As for the music, it was fun to use an imagined score of an imagined movie as a prime reference. It provided a lovely opportunity to indulge the affective aspects of modulating modality by swinging through varieties of overtone (more or less "sharp") and reciprocal (more or less "flat") modes in resonance with the story. *W. A. Mathieu*

and each time he says a new name
(audience buzz cue)
there's a louder buzz from the bees:

Zarzo, Zeeza, Zanzan, Zink,
(buzz crescendo)

Zeno, Zardo, Zo, Zooey,
Zap, Zanzinzo, Zeeper, Zazoo, Zip...
(buzz decrescendo)

The sun is beating down.
Suddenly there's a flash of light,
and in the place of Henry and his bees
there's a large jar of honey, almost white,
as if from Paradise, glowing like a pot of gold.

All of this takes place before the credits.

(spoken) Now the story begins.

2

(sung): We are in the world of the bees.
Zarzz is a bee with progressive ideas.
He's been to France. He feels independent,
wants to revolutionize the bees' lives,
thinks about breaking out of routine
and starting his own hive.
He saves up pollen secretly
in abandoned hexagons in a nearby field,
and he is in love with Zuzz.
He wants to make Zuzz his queen.

Zarzz is a bee who wants to make a difference,
but he doesn't appreciate the divine pattern
involved in being a bee. His intentions are good,
but there's only so far you can go
before you betray beedom, before you build —
not castles in the air — but hives in hell.
His radical ideas might ruin his hive forever!

Enter the blind beekeeper.
He wants to learn the higher metaphysics of bees,
to touch with the knowledge of his heart
the geometric perfection of the bee,
the symbolically ritual patterns,
the building patterns,
the dance patterns
the patterns whose results
are deep medicine for man,
prophetically ordained,
the very continuation of the species.

The flash that blinded Henry as a youth
he wants to re-experience
as spiritual illumination.

The blind beekeeper also is in love.
He also wants to build hexagons of perfection
and a palace of pure sweetness.
Her name is Rosa,
a poor girl from a foreign land.
Henry is Rosa's strength,
and Rosa is Henry's eyes.

Now here is the strange part:
whenever Henry works with his bees,
and talks to them in bee language,
he starts seeing them,
visually seeing each one of them.
When he's away from the hive he's blind,
but when he faces the hive
he's an alchemist achieving pure gold.

3

Meanwhile, Zarzz and Zuzz decide to leave
the hive
in search of greener pastures.
They pack up their legs with pollen
and head out after sunset.

But bees don't fly after dark.
They get lost. They fly into foreign fields.
They get cold, and cold is fatal for flying bees.

Their story gets quite sad, actually sad,
as Zarzz realizes he may have doomed both
their lives.

Zarzz is a thoughtful bee, and is wracked with
guilt and worry.

He starts to pray, for bees are believers,
and have a beeline to the Divine Being.

Then he talks over the situation with Zuzz.

Zarzz says: Zee zuzz, za za-za-za
zarzi zuzzo zab zuzzo
zizz za-za-za zarzo zoo.

Zuzz says: Zarzi zaz zaz zo-zo-zo-zo-zo
ziz zar zuzzo zizz zo zo za-za
zazizzo zazizzo.

Zarzz says: Zazo zizo zizz?

Zuzz says: Zazo zinzinzup zardo-do, zinzanzo
zar zar.

Zarzz says: Zee Zuzz, za zwa zi za zo.

Zuzz says: zo

Zarzz says: za za za.

4

Henry comes to the hive in the morning.
At the center of the hive everything is normal.

(audience: buzz)

The queen is laying her eggs.

The nurses are taking the eggs to the nursery.

But out in the streets the bees are abuzz.

He sees the bees in clusters
talking about Zarzz and Zuzz.

"Where have they gone? What have they done?"

What have they gone and done?

What'll we do? How can we bring 'em back?

What'll we do? What'll we do?"

(end audience cue)

As the blind beekeeper looks into the hive,
he suddenly has *double* sight!

He sees not only his bees,
he also sees Zarzz and Zuzz miles away
in a field bounded by meadow flowers,
frozen nearly to death,
trying to sun themselves enough to fly.

There's no time to lose!

The beekeeper calls to the bees.
Their shiny multiple eyes all turn to him...
He dances.

He dances the dance of the map,
the map of the field where Zarzz and Zuzz are.
He turns in circles to indicate miles.

He faces in their direction.
He tilts his arms — so — to show their
longitude.

He tilts his arms — so — to show their
latitude.

Now he calls each one by name
to go to them, to bring them back:

"Go Zuza, Zy, Zan, Zee,
Zarzo, Zeeza, Zanzan, Zink,
go Zeno, Zardo, Zo, Zooley,
Zap, Zeeper, Zazoo, Zip,
go Zeezee, Zantham, Zoetrope, Zeke,
Zany, Zappa, Zazz, Zoee,

Zanzinzo, Zoonzinzan, Zeezay, Zoze,
go Zaza, go Zipe. They buzz in response!
(audience: buzz)

Go Zak, Zook.

Go Zipper, Zay.

They lift from the hive, an ecstatic cloud,
they buzz like chainsaws, then off they zoom.
The blind beekeeper smiles and waves them on.

He waves them on and on...
(spoken) Does the story end happily?

(sung) They all burst into song!

(audience sings bee canon)

5

Zarzz and Zuzz come back to the hive.
Everyone's glad they're still alive.

The queen makes Zarzz her intimate vizier.
Zuzz marries Zarzz and gets busier and busier.

The blind beekeeper makes lots of money
selling their extraordinary honey,

and marries Rosa in a flash of light
so utterly intense he regains his sight.

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