Hover
A MUSIC THEATRE WORK IN THREE ACTS

by

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Abstract

Hover is an experimental music theatre work for seven singers (mezzo-soprano, tenor, baritone, soprano, alto, tenor, bass) and a quintet consisting of Bb clarinet (doubling on bass clarinet), electric guitar (doubling on classical guitar), percussion (vibraphone, glockenspiel, suspended cymbals, high-hat, triangle, tam-tam, snare, toms, and bass drum), viola (doubling on violin), and double bass. It is approximately 90 minutes in duration. Act I is approximately 40 minutes and is comprised of four scenes; Act II is approximately 30 minutes and is comprised of two scenes; Act III is approximately 20 minutes and is comprised of three scenes. An intermission is possible between Acts I and II. Hover is the story of one woman – The Dreamer – and her attempt to come to terms with a traumatic event that happened one year ago – an accidental waking during surgery. In a flashback memory of the event, she dreams she meets two important men from two different centuries – The Traveler and The Diver – who have also experienced moments where their bodies have performed seemingly impossible feats. All three face profound skepticism in the telling of their own stories and in trying to cope begin to dismantle cultural myths to prove that their personal stories are true and hold weight. The music of Hover supports this action by assimilating many styles, melodic motives, harmonic devices, and textural approaches into one language that reflects the multifaceted nature of the narrative.
Preface

The investigation summarized in “Concerning Interdisciplinarity in Music Theatre, Redux – Workshopping and Staging” was carried out within the framework of the Mitacs Accelerate Internship “Investigating the impact of alternative performance environment in the development of Hover, a new chamber opera” with faculty supervisor Dr. Dorothy Chang and industry partner Redshift Music Society. The final draft of the musical score was completed during a second Mitacs Accelerate Internship, “Investigating the impact of alternative performance environment in the development of Hover, a new chamber opera - II”, also with Dr. Chang as faculty supervisor and co-partners Redshift Music Society and Tapestry Opera.

The photographs presented in Appendix A and in the section entitled “Concerning Interdisciplinarity in Music Theatre, Redux – Workshopping and Staging” are used with permission and credited to Diane Smithers. The libretto in Appendix B and excerpt in Chapter 1.4 of the dissertation are used with permission and credited to Lindsay Cuff.

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Introduction

In the music theatre work, Hover, the principal character, The Dreamer, undergoes a journey characterized primarily by the act of validation. Wrestling with forces beyond her control – disparate mechanisms of fate, magic, and the laws of nature – she emerges from a period of uncertainty with renewed confidence. This sea change of character, and the now greatly expanded view of the world that emboldens it, owes much to her dark and incredible experience. My own creative journey, both leading up to the point of Hover’s musical inception and throughout its composition process, has a comparative central narrative.

When Lindsay Cuff the librettist approached me in 2009 with a script, I, like The Dreamer, went in for a routine procedure (having worked with writers and collaborated on musical theatre works enough to feel, albeit prematurely, that I had a good grasp of the genre). I too “went under”, swimming about in the dark, going deeper and deeper trying to make sense of this strange story and its elusive needs, until I awoke, disoriented and daunted by the needs of the project. I, too, am now a more confident composer of music theatre, having reconciled my past assertions of the genre and my own writing therein with present experience.

Beyond an abstract hunger for interdisciplinary experience and collaboration, what drew me initially to Ms. Cuff’s work was its ambition, imagination, and complexity. When reading it I felt I was in the midst of a kindred artistic spirit, as much for its language as its longing to articulate so many ideas within the context of one piece. At the time, I, too, felt
a strong desire to articulate all of my thoughts at once, so this challenge was enticing to say the least. A number of factors helped channel this longing into something that resembled a rationally justified commitment to sign on to such a long-term endeavour:

1. The story’s confluence of historical periods suggested a polystylistic approach that appealed to my musical sensibilities. As time would tell, these influences contributed to an adaptive approach more than an allusory or quotational approach,¹ although these latter subgenres were used in some sections of the work.

2. The story’s overlapping layers of consciousness resonated with my philosophy and psychological interests. They also bore relation to my harmonic writing, which is defined by, among other characteristics, overlapping strata and polytonality.

3. The story’s guiding elemental force – water – was an exciting governing entity, immediately suggestive of textures and rhythms, not to mention ripe with historical precedent, both in the major repertory and in my own writing.

Each relating to musical ideas that began to take shape in my head, these factors taken together as a whole seemed to comprise a yet unwritten work that could unify the many streams and interests that had hitherto felt separate from one another in the scope of my work. In one corner there was my interest in music theatre, from opera to Broadway-style musicals to experimental, genre-defying works. In another there was my compositional language, slowly coming into focus as neo-Impressionistic, undulating, and dream-like, with a strong emphasis on melody and extended harmonies with microtonal inflections.

Finally, there was my work in the popular realms of songwriting, jazz, and rock music. Long kept separate from the other two streams, this influence would turn up in *Hover* in electric guitar colours, vintage swing numbers, folk melodies, and hymn-like choral passages.

Thus armed with my passion for interdisciplinarity and many sound reasons all asking “why not”, I began to unpack this box of narratives and to try to get a sense of the sound-world that would help make sense of them. Thanks to the influences on my own musical language described above, imagining this world didn’t prove to be too gargantuan a task. Rather, the difficulty lay in the libretto’s form, setting, and scope; more precisely, in how to delineate these elements through musical composition.

In opera and music theatre, it falls to the composer to control the pace of the drama, illuminate subtext, and in general help the audience find the way “in” to the work through the music. I knew that *Hover* had the potential to be a unique, provocative, powerful, and moving work of musical theatre, but given the ambitious nature of the story (see Chapter Two), I knew I had my work cut out for me. This document, exploring *Hover’s* background and genre, the part music plays in its interdisciplinary approach, its salient musical features, and how its music helps delineate its dramatic form, is a record of this work and how it was completed.
Chapter 1: Background

It will no doubt provide context to Chapters 2 – 4 to enumerate and investigate the myriad factors that exerted influence upon my work prior to my beginning: what experience and prejudice did I bring to the table, and what was already awaiting my arrival thereon? As noted in the introduction, I had spent much time during my graduate studies investigating music’s relation to drama and identifying the vast spectra of micro-genres that this liaison has spawned over the ages. During this time I also continued to explore many different styles of composition, both past and contemporary, slowly distinguishing those whose traces would manifest themselves in my own writing from those who I admired immensely but felt less kinship towards; still further I distinguished these existing styles from elements in my writing that felt most personal and wholly original. Finally, and not to be underestimated, was the large amount of work – both conceptual and specific – that Ms. Cuff had completed on the project before seeking a composer collaborator.\(^2\)

1.1 Defining the Music Theatre Genre

Experimental music theatre saw a renaissance during the twentieth century as composers, writers, and directors sought new methods of expression. Composers such as Harry Partch, Robert Ashley, Murray Schafer, Merdith Monk, and Heiner Goebbels, and theatre artists such as Bertold Brecht, Samuel Beckett, and more recently Robert Wilson have all

\(^2\) In addition to the libretto, which constituted her M.F.A. thesis under UBC Professor Meryn Cadell, Ms. Cuff had made Garageband audio sketches of a few passages. Some of these I kept as quotations or short fragments that were later incorporated and/or developed, depending on how they fit into my own scheme/conception of the work.
contributed works in this elusive genre. Works by artists such as these don’t seek to marry
different, well-defined genres on stage so much the works assume their fusion at a
fundamental creative level. A musical work such as Goebbels’s I Went to the House but
did Not Enter is hardly conceivable without staging, while Wilson’s theatrical CIVIL WarS
would not exist if it weren’t for the scores of different contemporary composers.

What sets works like these outside the realm of the traditional forms of opera and musical
theatre varies from case to case. In some cases it is conceptual music whose message is
deepened by a visual element; in others it is a narrative that relies on rhythm, song, or
perhaps the abstract counterpoint of incidental music to fulfill its potential. Both music
and theatre underwent major early twentieth century revolutions and emerged from them
in similarly fragmented ways. While one general path sought to expand the language of
the respective mediums with ever increasing degrees of complexity and hybridity, another
took a more detached, semiological route. In this latter tradition, words, musical gestures,
and physical things were objectified and organized to express some underlying conceptual
meaning. For example, in John Cage’s 1952 work 4’33”, the notion of “music” becomes
any sound occurring in the concert hall during performance as the musicians remain
unplaying onstage, often as a theatrical still life. Since then, composers have continued to
advance this type of work in subtle and intuitive directions, drawing text, theatre, and
music from the same palette to create a vast spectrum of styles and genres.

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4 Philip Glass, “It’s a state of attention,” in Robert Wilson from Within, ed. Margery Arent Safir (Paris: The Arts
   Arena, 2011), 113.
5 Stephen Walsh, “The Action Drama and the Still Life: Enescu, Stravinsky, and Oedipus” in Ancient Drama in
   Music for the Modern Stage, ed. Peter Brown and Suzana Ograjensek (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010),
   315.
1.2 Situating *Hover* on the Music Theatre Spectrum

In the case of a spectrum whose extremes are defined by, on the one end, clear relationships between meaning and the materials that convey it (i.e. music, text, action) and complex or ambiguous relationships on the other, *Hover* falls somewhere in the middle. While not as abstract as, for example, Philip Glass’s and Robert Wilson’s *Einstein on the Beach* or Heiner Goebbels’s *I Went to the House but did Not Enter* – pieces that contain actions inviting a good degree of conjecture as to their meaning – *Hover* may nonetheless remain elusive on a first viewing in terms of its language and the messages it aims to convey. This enigmatic quality is embodied most readily by the symbolic nature of the characters and their highly stylized speech patterns. The characters’ archetypical natures are demonstrated most simply by their names (“The Dreamer”, “The Traveler”, “The Diver”, “The Anesthesiologist”, etc.), while the repetition, distillation, and fragmentation of text can often give the work an unnatural tenor (see Example 2.7b for instance). Further challenging an easy read of the show is the ambiguity of place that pervades the libretto, or what I call more constructively a “confluence of settings”. In the middle of Act II, for example, it may be strangely jolting how effortlessly the Chorus moves from the 16th century to the 20th century to the 21st century in the span of about 5 minutes without scene or costume change.

Fortunately there is a mechanism in place that quells the potential objection to such ludicrous time travel, and that is the mechanism of the *dream*. In a dream, anything is possible, which could be either liberating or paralyzing, given the lack of limitations or

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7 Salzman, *New Music Theater*, 93.
I owe my safe navigation of this sea of possibility to an approach that allowed for both intuition and rigor in the composition process: the former applied to stylistic choices, the latter to texture, orchestration, and structure. The simplest and most obvious delineation of style separates the three time periods in question: the present, the turn of the 20th century, and the late-16th century. At times sharply juxtaposed from one moment to the next, at other times overlapping in concurrent layers, these styles owe much to composers that lived during these times, at times even directly quoting or adapting existing material towards dramatic purposes. Baroque composers of motets or guitar music, such as Tomás Luis de Victoria and Alonso Mudarra, are manifested in the score during Spanish Inquisition scenes, while elements of Stravinsky and Weill informed the music of The Diver’s routine (based on Harry Houdini and his acts).

However disparate these styles may be, my aim is to unite them in a musical landscape that is consistent and contemporary through orchestration, rhythm, harmony, and melody, not to mention the treatment of the voice. While certain aspects of these I dare claim as original, I readily acknowledge that the development of a personal style is a slow process, and that my musical language – in Hover and in general – draws on a number of composers whose work has resonated with me throughout my life.9

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8 Igor Stravinsky, An Autobiography (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998), 131-132. Stravinsky’s view that restraints are essential in achieving a work of art is one that I share.
9 A short list of these would include: Claude Debussy and George Crumb – for orchestration, harmony, and colour; Kurt Weill and Stephen Sondheim – rhythm, and vocal melody (and Weill for instrumentation); Louis Andriessen and the post-minimalists (Michael Gordon, in particular) – for rhythm, harmony, and texture (and use of the spoken voice in the case of Andriessen); and R. Murray Schafer and Harry Partch – for theories and concepts regarding music and drama, and performance practice (not to mention temperament in the case of Partch).
1.3 Some Examples of My Past Work that Give Precedent to Hover

The following three examples are drawn from works written during my doctoral studies that helped me to refine many things that would come into play during Hover’s composition process: my orchestrational approach to medium-sized chamber ensemble writing; my palette of vocal expression (including chant, rhythmicized speech, sprechstimme, spoken word, and standard prosodic text setting); and what I would call certain colouristic and textural trademarks. These trademarks include: the occasional use of non-standard temperaments and microtonal inflections; electro-acoustic elements such as filters, samples and the orchestrated simulation of electro-acoustic effects; controlled improvisatory passages; the “vertical” overlapping of varying strata; and the use of flowing eighth notes or tuplets to help tie together sections of complex meter.

Example 1.1 – Congruency Excerpt

To the left is an excerpt from my work Congruency for large chamber ensemble. In this work, the main question I address is how smaller components fit (or don’t fit) into larger components without losing their proper identities, a very malleable concept which can be transmuted to notes, parts, phonemes, individuals, countries, etc. This example is important for it shows early usages of improvisatory figures (see the box in the clarinet part), multiple vocal styles within the context of one work, and thick counterpoint used to achieve a composite impression of the sum of parts.
This desire to intentionally blend elements, to soften the distinction of lines, and in many ways to undermine interpreting the piece any one specific way, was carried further in my song cycle from 2012, *Songs from the Rainshadow’s Edge, or Selflessness*. The driving concept of the piece is in many ways exactly this notion of relativity in viewing one’s self and the world. I tried to convey this lack of grounding through minute discrepancies in tuning between instruments (as well as through the use of “mis-tuned” instruments such as gongs and a toy piano), tremolo background textures, the sustain of instruments such as the electric guitar and vibraphone, and finally through orchestrated electro-acoustic effects such as backwards tape direction, feedback swells, and echo delays. This work also saw extensive usage of improvisation and spoken word (see Example 1.2).

The 2011 chamber opera *Shadow Catch* (libretto by Daphne Marlatt), for which I contributed one of four acts, was a landmark work for me both in that it was the first opera of mine to receive a full production and in that it provided me an opportunity to explore many ideas on which I had been cogitating for years prior. Among these was the role of the running eighth note in sections of complex meter, as well as expanded use of the singer’s expressive capabilities as dramatic performer (particularly in a chamber chorus...
role). In the following and final example (1.3), both of these are featured, the latter demonstrated by contour-defined rhythmicized speech (the one-line staves), freely spoken lines, sung text, and body percussion all synthesized together.

Going back to a notion mentioned earlier (apart from this assortment of musical idiosyncrasies), what the last two examples share both with each other and with Hover is their association with the dream as context and motivating concept. What’s more, each assumes as a starting point the assertion that dream and life are interchangeable,\(^\text{10}\) and from this assumption they move forward to further deconstruct the components of the real.

At the end of Act II of Shadow Catch, in the wake of a ghost’s disappearance, the waki (a witness to this act) asks: “Whose dream was that? Was I / in his? Or was he in mine?”. In Songs from the Rainshadow’s Edge, or Selflessness, the comparable philosophy is summed up with a stanza from Movement V: “…but what dreams in slumber/ My dreaming self does dredge/ Up still recall the other/ Side of rainshadow’s edge-/ Where thunder clouds roll off,/ And life’s film, scarce begun,/ Is skimmed to ‘morrow’s trough,/ Revealing us as one-“. In the same vein, in the opening aria from Hover, The Dreamer sings, “when I’m awake/ it’s like I’m dreaming,/ and I dream only to wake”.

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Many twentieth-century psychological theories, while perhaps eschewing this approach to life and dream as flip sides of a coin, would at least advise analyzing dreams to glean insight into one’s waking, primary life.\footnote{See for example the work of Jung. C.G. Jung, \textit{Memories, Dreams, Reflections}, trans. Richard and Clara Winston. (New York: Random House, 1961) 11.} Returning to the comparison of the opening remarks of this document then, if this discussion is the post-somatic investigation, the creative process must be the dream itself. However, if in this dream (and thus in the creative process that yielded \textit{Hover}) anything is possible, on what grounds can \textit{Hover}’s compositional inner workings be analyzed with any degree of objectivity? Chapters 2 – 4 show how, far from being relieved of responsibility, it fell to the composer to convey the ephemeral quality of the setting through an organized approach to its musical materials.
1.4 Personae Dramatis, Instrumentation, Concept, and Summary of Dramatic Events

As a bridge between the above discussion of Hover’s background and the subsequent discourse, the provision of a list of dramatis personae and a summary of the show’s dramatic events and their settings is provided below.

Primary Setting: A public swimming pool

Principal Characters:

- The Dreamer (mezzo-soprano), female, age 34, from the present
- The Traveler (baritone), male, age 30, from the 16th century (based on the story of Gil Perez, a Spanish soldier said to have teleported from Manila to Mexico City)
- The Diver (tenor), male, age 52, from the turn of the 20th century (based on Harry Houdini)
- Soprano – Nurse 1/Tribunal 1/Audience 1
- Alto – Nurse 2/Tribunal 2/Audience 2
- Tenor – Doctor/Tribunal 3/Audience 3
- Bass – Anesthesiologist/Head of Tribunal/Audience Puncher

Orchestra*:

- Clarinetist, doubling on Bb and Bass Clarinet
- Guitarist, doubling on Electric Guitar (with delay, compression, and reverb pedals) and Classical Guitar
- Percussionist; percussion list: vibraphone, glockenspiel, two suspended cymbals, high-hat, two toms, snare, bass drum, and tamtam
- Violist, doubling on violin in higher passages
- Double bassist
*A Note on the Ensemble – I chose the above ensemble to respond to Hover’s:

- dramatic needs (choosing instruments typical of various styles and periods, i.e. clarinet and kit percussion components for early jazz dance-band music);
- colouristic needs (choosing instruments that are capable of a wide-range of colouristic effects, i.e. electric guitar with pedal board, extended string techniques);
- orchestrational needs (choosing an ensemble that could provide a small chamber sound in additional to a full band sound, i.e. a large range, instruments from different choirs, melodic and harmonic instruments);
- future financial needs (keeping the ensemble relatively small and efficient to do my best to avoid prohibitive cost constraints of future productions).

To carry this last point further, the doublings are exemplary of many typical pit orchestras that require a large battery of sounds from only a few players. Two clarinets, two guitars, and all the percussion are necessary; a violin is optional based on performer experience (all high passages are playable, though some may fit more comfortably within a violin’s range).
The following synopsis/conceptual motivation is taken from Ms. Cuff’s own introduction to her libretto. This would also serve as a programme note for Hover’s premiere.

The word hoax is said to have come from the magic incantation “Hocus Pocus,” which is said to be a distortion of “Hoc est Corpus” (this is the body).

What happens when our bodies do things that are not possible: great escapes from enclosed chambers, travel from one side of the world to the other in a minute, or wakefulness during surgery? What happens when we tell our stories and no one believes our experiences of truth or pain? There is sometimes a gap between what “is” and what we personally know to be true. I am here but I am not. I hover but I sink so far.

This is the story of a woman, the Dreamer, and her struggle to come to terms with a traumatic event that took place one year ago. The opera begins with a swimming lesson that dissolves into a flashback/memory of the traumatic event, a “waking” during surgery. Through recalling the events, the Dreamer meets two important men from two different centuries. These men, the Traveler and the Diver, have also experienced moments where their bodies have performed seemingly impossible feats.

The characters undergo a journey in which they must confront issues related to personal narrative. They face profound skepticism in the telling of their own stories and become paralyzed and suspended in a moment where neither emotional nor physical movement is possible. All three must find a way to cope in the face of this skepticism and slowly and intentionally begin to dismantle cultural myths and prove that their personal stories are true and hold weight.”

-Lindsay Cuff
Figure 1 – Salient dramatic occurrences and their settings, scene by scene

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act</th>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>a public swimming pool, present day</td>
<td>The Dreamer and ensemble engage in a swimming lesson; The Dreamer recalls an experience from one year ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>hospital, one year ago</td>
<td>The Dreamer is anesthetized for surgery and begins her dream; The Traveler enters the dream-world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mexico City, 1593; dream</td>
<td>The Traveler discovers himself in the Plaza Mayor of Mexico City and is accused of witchcraft by the Tribunal of the Spanish Inquisition for teleporting across the ocean; he is imprisoned; The Dreamer “awakes” in her dream and discovers a pool where a water ballet occurs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>a theatre in eastern North America, circa 1926</td>
<td>The Diver suddenly appears and performs his Chinese Water Torture Cell routine while the company acts as audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>confluence of settings – Mexico/Theatre/Dream</td>
<td>The Traveler is tortured by the Inquisition; The Diver tries to prove his claim to be able to withstand any punch in his dressing room post-performance; he is mortally wounded by a punch; The Dreamer attends these events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>hospital; one year ago;</td>
<td>The Dreamer is forced onto an operating table and awakens from her anesthesia during her surgery; she tries to communicate but is paralyzed; The Diver and Traveler comfort her post-surgery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>swimming pool/confluence of settings</td>
<td>The Dreamer slowly awakens; company tableau in the scene of the swimming lesson one year ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>swimming pool/Mexico/hospital</td>
<td>The Traveler is acquitted with the testimony of The Dreamer; The Diver converses with The Doctor about magic and reality; the company attends the death of The Diver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>confluence of settings</td>
<td>The Dreamer comes back to the present day; end of swimming lesson, The Dreamer swims; company finale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 2: Concerning Interdisciplinarity in Music Theatre – Balance, Flexibility and Using Drama Towards Stylistic Fusion

2.1 Balance and Flexibility Between Disciplines and Elements

…I had reason to suggest two good ways of looking at the opera composer’s relationship to his text. The text brings out or directs latent tendencies which the composer could not otherwise have realized – in the libretto is the inspiration. On the other hand, the composer brings his particular powers and ideals to the text, and can only succeed with such elements in it as really suit him…

-Joseph Kerman

Made roughly fifty years ago, this observation, while perhaps worn down by the many experiments, collaborations, and spawns of the operatic genre that have occurred since, is still valid insomuch as it proposes a linear spectrum for the composer’s role in music theatre. Once handed a dramatic text to set, a composer has it in his or her power to control in detail aspects of timing, psychology, character expression, place, and overall dramatic pace. With these building blocks of theatre under their command, one might say that the composer in many ways is able to occupy, at least in part, the role that a director typically plays in standard, spoken theatre. This type of power defined the composer’s role in opera well into the twentieth century, and in some cases continues to do so even into the late twentieth century in works such as Peter Maxwell Davies’s Eight Songs for a Mad King, where the drama is embedded in precise notational practice or given instruction in the score by the composer.

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12 Joseph Kerman, Opera as Drama (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1956), 142.
13 Peter Maxwell Davies, Eight Songs for a Mad King (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1969).
As one of many music theatre works whose primary concern is storytelling, *Hover* falls somewhere on the first half of this spectrum: the libretto serves as musical inspiration. As illustrated in the previous summary of events, physicality is central to this libretto, and thus supporting the action (overall arc) and actions (specific) is paramount in bringing the story to life. I immediately recognized the score's obligation in offering this support, and thus wrote to ensure that the score works in harmony with the narrative. Moreover, it was my intention to imbue the score with a balance not only between libretto and music, but with the potential for balance between the text (libretto and music combined) and artistic imprints from future directors and performers.

*Hover*'s score acknowledges this power and puts it to responsible use through a number of approaches to musical material and notation that seek to encourage these types of imprints. The work aims for balance and flexibility in this regard through three main methods: 1) showcasing the visual/physical nature of the work through either silence/space for action to receive primary focus, or a direct scoring “to” (or in some cases “against”) picture;\(^{14}\) 2) presenting the text clearly via a range of vocal techniques – including frequent spoken lines – that encourage ample performative liberties; and 3) and aleatoric, improvisatory passages for all performers.

1a. There are many dramatic moments in *Hover* that are well served by pure silence. On the one hand I made these decisions in order to best let the action speak purely for itself, unencumbered by competing musical expression; on the other, I am aware that silences of this nature – that is to say those contrasted starkly with adjacent sonic gestures – can

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become imbued with a potential defined by this very contrast. In Japanese Noh theatre, for example, this “negative space” is given a name – *ma* – and is considered to be as powerful, if not more so, than surrounding moments of sound. In the following example, a Chorus member walks up to The Diver and punches him during the silence held by the fermata.

ACT II Scene 1 The Diver is Punched a Second Time

1b. In comparison with traditional opera, *Hover*’s libretto itself contains a great many stage directions which propel the action forward and reveal the show’s inherently physical character. In cases where the drama is best served by the counterpoint of an unspoken implication, a hidden emotion, or textbook dramatic irony, the music deliberately runs in opposition to what is occurring onstage (the above use of silence could be said to fall in

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In many passages however, the music is meant to support the action directly. In these cases, the music aims to focus attention on specific (and often spectacular) theatricalities such as physical torture, acrobatics, and fly work by mirroring their rhythms.

**ACT II Scene 1** Water is poured down the Traveler’s throat

2. Across the music theatre spectrum, approaches to text setting vary drastically. These range from the through-sung music dramas of Wagner to “number” operas such as Weill’s *Die Dreigroschenoper*, where songs alternate with straight theatre,\(^{16}\) to “intermediary” forms of expression,\(^{17}\) such as those found in Andriessen’s *De Materie* where text is often spoken with natural inflection and contour but embedded in a through-composed score.

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through careful placement or rhythmic notation. Hover falls into this latter category of hybrid work with regards to the treatment of its libretto. Operating under the general assertion that semantic comprehension of text is vital, no fewer than six general notational methods were required to respond to the show’s needs:

i) Naturally spoken text, beginning on an indicated beat – used: to communicate expository passages containing important information; to contrast with sung passages; or colouristically, as a separate layer (where comprehension isn’t paramount) (Example 2.3a)

ii) Rhythmicized speech (no contour indicated) – used in sections requiring careful placement for semantic clarity or to suggest a specific means of declamation (Example 2.3b)

iii) Rhythmicized speech (contour indicated) – used where a specific or stylized (non-realistic) quality of speech is desired (Example 2.3c)

iv) Sprechstimme notation – used in passages where the “feel” (scansion and contour) of spoken word would benefit from a heightened emotive quality brought out through the suggestion of pitches and portamento (Example 2.3d)

v) Hybrid of melody and speech – used to encourage a degree of interpretive freedom in melodic passages through occasional spoken interjections and/or half-intoned pitches (Example 2.3e)

vi) Traditional notation – used to present important melodic material or in sections of recitative (Example 2.3f).

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18 Louis Andriessen, *De Materie*, with the ASKO Ensemble, dir. Reinbert de Leeuw, recorded February 26, June 29 and 30, 1994, Nonesuch 79367, 1996, CD.

3. Emblematic of the aforementioned balance of elements to which Hover strives, methods i, ii, and iv of the above section encourage a greater degree of input on the part of the performer or director than one might find in traditionally notated vocal music. This advocacy for a type of controlled artistic freedom in performing the work is also demonstrated by the many other aleatoric and improvisatory sections contained in the score. Found in nearly all parts, these gestures are notated with boxes and arrows, notes without stems, or within meterless passages, and they address an assortment of needs and goals. Examples 2.4a and 2.4b show a couple of these along with the corresponding logic behind their usage.
Acting as a transition between Act III Scenes 1 and 2, this passage features unmetered measures and a number of fermatas to allow for flexibility in staging and timing.

Example 2.4a

To prepare for his Chinese Water Torture Cell Act, the staging of which places theatrical timing in a position of primary importance, the Diver is given repetitive material that can be interpreted in many ways and for lengths corresponding to the raising and lowering of the ropes that keep him suspended.

Example 2.4b
2.2 Connections Between Musical Style and Drama

As mentioned in the introduction, one of my aims in composing Hover was to amalgamate different modes of expression into a cohesive language. Once again, it is a question of situating the approaches to style along a linear spectrum whose extremes are juxtaposition/allusion on the one end, and fusion/adaptation on the other. In the first case, musical objects retain defining characteristics of their original identity though they may be placed in contrast to one other either vertically or horizontally in the score (original identity refers to either a direct quotation or an obvious allusion to an existing style, i.e. motet, swing, etc.).

The beginning of Act II contains examples of both. Example 2.5 shows an overlapping of several strata – a recitative-style vocal line, a slowly-evolving layer of sustained background “noise”, a direct quote from of a Mudarre guitar fantasia (popular in the
Spanish speaking world in the 16th century20), and another vocal line loosely echoing the guitar in a quiet hum. Occurring simultaneously, these elements form a “vertical”, or simultaneous composite impression (recall Chapter One’s discussion of Congruency and Songs from the Rainshadow’s Edge, or Selflessness) that contrasts with the section that immediately follows in a sequential juxtaposition (Example 2.6). The gestures that characterize this next passage are transparent in their allusion to early twentieth century popular music; the melodramatic ragtime chords that announce the end of The Diver’s routine have a framing function for the blues-derived number that follows.

This unapologetic borrowing of musical styles from the past – in the first case an exact replica of a baroque work, in the second an appropriation of early jazz – is no accident. What these examples share beyond a historically derived simplicity is their common role as diegetic functions within the drama. The dramatic importance of diegetic music, or music that is located within the action (a song the characters themselves can hear, for

example), can range from inconsequential (for example, removing the guitar excerpt from Example 2.5 wouldn’t jeopardize the drama) to nearly indispensable (as in the case of The Diver’s show music, de rigeur in the case of turn-of-the-century vaudeville). To avoid any incongruities with the setting, the presence of diegetic music within period dramas naturally gives rise to the compositional choice of employing historical styles, often less musically sophisticated than the non-diegetic, “pit” music. Such is the case with these examples. As one of three criteria that render the style of a given diegetic excerpt credible, Robbert van der Lek, in his study of Korngold’s Die Tote Stadt, lists as a reason: “The harmony is extremely simple: it is entirely diatonic (without even a secondary dominant)...’ein altes Lied’.”

This informative study goes on to explore how musical objects such as these interact with and even inform materials in the surrounding score, an interaction especially relevant in the case of The Diver’s aria in Act II. In this case, a transformation from a simple song into a harmonically and rhythmically complex hybrid aria also reflects a journey from one end of the style-approach spectrum to the other.

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22 I’m referring to off-stage music, or music that the characters do not hear.
23 Van der Lek, Diegetic Music in Opera and Film, 70.
Examples 2.6 through 2.7b provide a kind of flow chart that maps this evolution: from show music (Ex. 2.6 note how the choice of instrumentation, a high-hat and a classical guitar, reflects the diegesis), to informal performance inciting a punching demonstration (Ex. 2.7a), to a fusion of the previous examples (Ex. 2.7b). The point at which the music relocated from inside the action to outside is hopefully debatable, as the point of this development is to bring us away from the outer, physical struggle, and into The Diver’s interior, spiritual struggle. This is a place that, while influenced no doubt by the music his ears hear, is more complex, psychological, and profound, and thus is best supported by a non-diegetic treatment.
This journey leads to the final example (2.7c), where the subtle presence of multitudinous strata interpolated from the previous examples is barely discernible. They have been fused and re-fragmented to bring The Diver’s being at odds with his environment into sharp relief. Complementing this type of fusion, where the act of bringing disparate themes together to create something new occurs in a step-by-step, transparent process over time, is a different notion of fusion – the adaptation of preexisting styles. In many instances, such as the first of The Diver examples above (3.7a), and in the motet-style setting of the Tribunal material, instead of direct quotes I have adapted aspects of swing and, in example 2.8, late renaissance style simply to suggest other eras (though the chant that begins the excerpt is drawn directly from the *Credo* incipit).
Yet another method of fusion is the more subtle means of recontextualization. By embedding one well-encoded semiological object in a foreign environment, a type of fusion has occurred; that is to say, two separate elements have been brought together, if only conceptually speaking, to create something new. One method of achieving this in Hover is through orchestration and colour. For example, a temporal fusion is achieved through integrating sounds that signify contemporary or late 20th century popular cultural movements, such as an e-bow on an electric guitar or the vibrato of a Hammond/Leslie rotor combination, into the larger context of late renaissance polyphony and morality play (see Example 2.9). This occurs through both extrageneric and congeneric means. The former, having to do with referencing non-motivic phenomena, begs the listener to consider two different historical movements simultaneously. The latter, having to do with referencing specific musical material within the work, unites The Traveler with The Dreamer by harkening back to the electric guitar colours, folk finger-picking style, and sustained, slightly de-tuned chords, that begin the work in the present day and accompany her opening aria. In Chapter Four, the notion of fusion will be further explored, though on formal and conceptual levels.

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25 An e-bow is an electronic device that “bows” an electric guitar string by means of a battery-produced electromagnetic field exerted on the string; a Hammond/Leslie combination is an organ/amplifier combination typical of gospel and 1960’s folk rock, among other popular styles.

Chapter 3: Musical Materials – Harmonic Devices and Progressions, Melodic Motives, and Other Considerations

The background provided in Chapter Two provides the reader with an idea of my aesthetic inclinations. To reiterate and summarize, however, here are a few salient features of my compositional language that are manifest in Hover:

i) extended, jazz-derived harmonies made up of stacked thirds

ii) frequent juxtaposition of two or more collections, either in closed position (resulting in highly extended harmonies) or separated by range into independent strata, resulting in polychords

iii) occasional microtonal shifts of the composite vertical sonority

iv) harmonic progressions and rhythms that draw on a combination of impressionistic, late Romantic/early modern, jazz, and folk styles

v) a strong sense of modality in linear material, both melodic/foreground and background.
3.1 Salient Harmonic Devices

Much in the same way that material can be stylistically juxtaposed to mark a transition or show myriad influences, so can two or more harmonic collections be used simultaneously or in close proximity. The simplest and most localized example of this is when a “foreign” sonority – that is to say a harmonic event that has been given little or no precedent in preceding idiomatic material\(^{27}\) – is introduced in order to reflect a specific change in the action or text. The first of these – a quick, microtonal shift downward of the entire D major (quarter-tone flat) sonority in Act I Scene I (m. 12) – implies not only the superficial act of The Dreamer submerging herself in water, but, given that the harmony does not “recover” from this (i.e. shift back upward) when she reemerges, it aims to imply a permanent shift in consciousness.

Not long after this, during The Dreamer’s aria depicting her traumatic hospital experience, she sings: “something happened in the in-between/when I was lying on the table/something horrible” (see mm. 57 – 76 in the attached score).

\(^{27}\) This is assuming a listenership with a knowledge base of Western styles.
The peak of this phrase, as indicated by heightened dynamic, pitch, and density of texture, is embodied by a clear juxtaposition of two sonorities: a polychord of $\text{G}_{\text{Eb}}\text{ major. Though the range is filled from E}_\flat^1$ up to D6, the E$_\flat$ and G are clearly demarcated in the lower and upper registers respectively, thus implying more than a composite harmony of augmented character (in jazz terminology – E$_\flat$ M7 $\flat$13); rather this demarcation is a representation of two bifurcating tendencies. Touching again on the common theme of consciousness and the question of where one is located therein, this “in-between” state is lost between two realities. This chord can be seen in Example 3.4.

The presence of polychords also helps to announce entrances, foreshadow material, and in general to accompany transitional passages. The above-mentioned relation between two major triads separated by a 3$^{rd}$ is also used extensively in The Diver’s routine, which is explored at length in the preceding section and foreshadowed by the juxtaposed harmonies of F# and A major in bar 608 of example 3.1. Another common juxtaposition is that of stacking a major triad with another whose root is the major 7$^{th}$ scale degree of the first. For example, in ex. 3.2, the D$_\flat$ is coloured by a C major chord in first inversion high above it in the electric guitar. In functional harmony this is reminiscent of a modified common-tone diminished relationship, or in jazz terminology it is a D$_\flat$ M7#9#4. Here, however, it is best described as a $\text{C}_{\text{Db}}$ polychord used to suggest ambiguity of The Dreamer’s perception as The Diver enters and her flashback begins. This chord also reflects a more general motion from D$_\flat$ to C major through the transition from the present.
day backwards in time to a swimming lesson (which itself takes the form of a vintage swing number in C major with many borrowed chords).

While the harmonic phenomena and the reasons behind their implementation may be too many to enumerate in the scope of this discussion, it will be worthwhile to point out at least one more harmonic mechanism and its function: that of the pedal tone. In Hover, the role of this age-old tool is multifold, ranging from abstract symbol representing an unrelenting force (i.e. that of religious or scientific dogma, as in Example 3.3a), to traditional harmonic device (see the instrumental segment in Example 3.3b), to dramatic implement used either to release tension by underpinning fragmented harmonies as they slowly crystallize as one chordal sonority, or to build tension by acting as a context against which other superimposed harmonies ascend (i.e. in Example 3.3c ).
This last example also shows the role of triadic relationships as they are spun out into progressions that briefly tonicize key areas related by thirds (i.e. G – B), a manifestation of one neo-Romantic influence on Hover’s harmonic writing. In other cases these progressions follow simple patterns that borrow modal tendencies from folk idioms; occasionally, however, these are used in combination with late Romantic style and with jazz harmony, a union that yields some of Hover’s more sophisticated harmonic writing. For example, The Dreamer’s opening aria begins with a simple, recurring progression of $B_b - D_b - A_b - G_b M7$ (a recurring version of which is featured prominently in Act III). The simplicity, minor character, and falling bass line of these changes (not to mention the guitar that carries them) suggest a contemporary folk idiom, and are appropriate for The Dreamer’s setting and melancholy outlook at the beginning of the show. However, the theme develops along with her exposition through harmonic territory that can be best described as a contemporary jazz/neo-Romantic-influenced mixture of extended tonality before settling again in the $B_b - D_b M$ territory. A harmonic analysis of mm. 57 – 76 is outlined below: as the passage is extended, please refer to the score itself for the full example. $B_b$ minor is indicated as this functions as tonic for the majority of the aria, but $D_b$ is the initial point of departure and final point of return.
The harmonic intrigue starts in bar 62 with the tonicization of the subdominant of G♭, which is achieved by means of a structural accent placing it at the beginning of a four bar phrase in addition to a registral accent in the low bass. At first it seems another simple progression will ensue until an unexpected event – a harmonic and hypermetric accent (and the first polychord discussed above) – occurs in bar 68. Due to the salient, quasi-cadential E – E♭ motion in the bass it appears that the latter has been tonicized through this tritone dominant substitution (flat II) and through the durational accent of two bars that follows. There are significant threats to this harmonic stability, however. One is the G major component of the polychord which persists throughout four bars. The other is the loss of low register as the bass moves upwards from E♭ to B, joining the other instruments in an inversion of the previous polychord.
With the introduction of new pitches F and A in bar 71 creating the more complex polychord $G_7^{\flat 7}$, the passage has reached a place of tonal ambiguity best described as a cluster with both Lydian augmented and octatonic characteristics. The pitches of this cluster are B – D – D♯ – F – F♯ – G – A, also suggesting the Lydian dominant mode of the acoustic scale. At this point, it might be still possible to hear the B and E♭ as two poles of a submediant-as-dominant / tonic relationship, but this likely would not endure the following jarring, downward tritone motion in the bass (note the word painting: “something broke between my mind and body”). The previous collection (an octatonic tetrachord stacked with a whole tone segment, B – C – D – D♯ – F – G – A) has been exchanged for a collection that is very nearly the mirror of this (that is to say a whole tone segment stacked with an octatonic tetrachord) through this tritone motion. Because of this, I call it a “tritone exchange” in Figure 2 above. This continues downward through a sequence of M7#13 chords with roots related by major thirds (F ; D♭ ; A), a harmonic mechanism, though with Romantic precedent, that draws largely on mid-twentieth century developments by jazz composers (i.e. John Coltrane).

The last of these chords, in bar 74, coincides with the structural highpoint of the phrase, which is defined by registral and dynamic accents, a textural density, and the multifunctional quality of the polychord $D♭_A$. In the wake of the preceding bars, which had (though weakly) proposed E♭ as a tonal center, and in light of the following A – A♭ motion

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30 Ibid. p. 19.
in the bass, which had already been established as a tritone dominant substitution-tonic relationship, it may be possible to hear this as the cadence in the key of A♭, despite the A major component of the polychord, which could be merely waiting to resolve downward by half-step, bringing the chord “into focus”. The following bar, however, continues on to D♭ M7. Two local harmonic features help ensure that this is experienced as the true point of arrival: a traditional V – I motion in the bass; and a III – I substitute dominant – tonic relationship in the upper register (note “alternate” analysis). Moreover, besides the fact that we know this to be the key of departure, a view of the large-scale harmonic motion reveals a very traditional organization around closely-related key areas – those of B♭ m, G♭, E♭, and A♭.

Though few excerpts push the envelope of this chromatic development further (see for example the transition between Acts II and III discussed in Chapter Four), this passage nonetheless helps to “set the stage” with some key primordial harmonic traits that will be explored throughout the work on various levels. These traits include: the presence of modal clusters; the strong modal role of VII in important themes (or, in many cases v or v♭); the juxtaposition of traditional progressions with more complex harmonic events; and, harmonic motion by mediant relationships. Indeed, mediant relationships influence the work’s harmonic organization not only on the local level (as is demonstrated by the above discussion), but on the large-scale plan of the work, where evidence of them can be seen relating major key areas that define the main characters.
Figure 3 – Overview of Key Centres with Corresponding Dramatic Foci

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act I</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>D₃⁻/b-flat (E₃, G, D₃, F, A)</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>[C]</th>
<th>fm (Trav: A, E, D)</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>E₅</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dreamer</td>
<td></td>
<td>Diver/Swimming</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hospital Trans.</td>
<td>Tribunal/Traveler</td>
<td>Ballet</td>
<td>Diver</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act II</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>(A, F#, G♯m/B)</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>F#</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>(D, F#, C, E, G♯)</th>
<th>F#/G♭</th>
<th>D₃</th>
<th>(A--------F)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tribunal</td>
<td></td>
<td>Diver</td>
<td></td>
<td>Trib.</td>
<td>Traveler</td>
<td>Surgery</td>
<td>(Dreamer)</td>
<td>Union/Transition/Awakening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act III</th>
<th>F#/dm</th>
<th>(G, E, A₃, G, A₃, F, A₃, G₃, F)</th>
<th>F#/dm</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>G₅</th>
<th>D₃</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tableau 1/Awakening</td>
<td></td>
<td>Traveler/Diver</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tableau 2</td>
<td>Dreamer</td>
<td>Swim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example, as is shown in Figure 3, the entire work hinges loosely on an axis of D / D₃ that takes the Dreamer from her opening material to her finish with the entire company, whereas The Traveler and Diver material often explores modes whose key centres are F# and F. Furthermore, mediant motion can be seen in Figure 3 in local arias and transitional passages, as well as in The Chorus (as Tribunal) material which often mimics that of the main characters. Though it would be possible to continue exploring further on purely harmonic grounds, it might be more enlightening to take note of mediant motion and other attributes discussed above while inspecting some examples of Hover’s important melodic motives in the following chapter.
3.3 Important Melodic Themes

The following section is not an attempt to reduce melodic signifiers to cellular, immodifiable units, but rather to introduce salient linear motives in their simplest genetic state. As Chapter Four’s discussion is about Hover’s form and how it is delineated by the development of these motives, my goal here is to provide enough information to make them traceable when said discussion occurs. The examples provided are organized by major character. Even though the individual chorus members are unique characters in their own right, it is the traits they exhibit as a whole that are most recognizable in continued iterations throughout the majority of the work; as such, they will be treated as a unit in this section.

The Dreamer’s theme/Fragment of Hover’s main theme
Two primary Diver themes

Example 3.6a

Two primary Traveler themes

Example 3.7a

Example 3.7b
At first glance, these themes may appear to possess certain similarities: they are in common time; they are mostly defined by stepwise motion or small intervalic leaps; they unfold at similar tempi (though this is not evident in the examples); they are accompanied by similar rhythmic structures; the harmonic motion is regular; and the harmonic progressions are reminiscent of the examples explored in the previous section. A detailed look, however, rewards further analysis of the score by revealing subtle, constitutional features that propagate and morph as the show goes on.

Important features of The Dreamer theme:

- repetition of scale degree 5 from anacrusis into downbeat before moving to scale degree 1
- motion to v and to VII\(^7\) respectively in bars two and four
- triplet motive exploring upper extensions of a IV M\(^9\) chord
- presence of flat sixth scale degree at key structural point of phrase

This material is later revealed as a component of the show’s final, and thus principal theme, though it is extended in length and explored with different harmonic treatments in later iterations.

Important features of the “Diver” theme (Examples 3.6”a” and “b”):

- (a) modal mixture, including Lydian and Mixolydian elements, as well as borrowed notes from the blues scale and parallel keys
- (a) swung rhythm
- (b) notable presence of borrowed harmonies v\(^7\) and VII in a major key

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32 When I refer to “themes”, I am speaking generally of “incarnations” or versions of motivic ideas.
33 These four bars develop later into an eight-measure, sentence-like phrase.
• (b) Scale degree 5 is used as an axis around which the melody turns (which is not the case in material with the other characters), implying a stasis representative of the containment, or “box”, in which his routine places him.

Important features of the “Traveler” theme:

• (a) use of all degrees of Lydian mode except 1 over I – iv harmonic motion;

This theme – the “Ordinary Man” theme – is featured prominently in Act III.

• (b) rising and falling stepwise motion of the melody

• (b) importance of ° VI, both directly from I and from vi, coinciding with peak of stepwise melodic motion

• (b) alternance of Mixolydian and Lydian modes

• (b) harmonic importance of VII\(^{4/3}\) and anticipation of resolution to I through syncopation and harmonic displacement

Far from functioning as a traditional opera chorus, the four singers given the titles of soprano, alto, tenor, and bass occupy a plethora of roles within the drama and are required to negotiate some the work’s thornier vocal writing. Throughout most of the drama, they play the “other” to the Dreamer-Diver-Traveler triumvirate, embodying abstract ideas such as homogeny, dogma, rigidity, and group mentality. In most instances, they function as an ensemble, this in and of itself reflecting the nature of these ideas. Compositionally, these characteristics are showcased in many different ways, some of the primary ones being:

• homophony

• repetition

• imitation
• angular rhythms (i.e. ones that do not always scan naturally).³⁴

Example 3.8 shows but one example of my writing for the chorus. In this short excerpt – which they sing as the Tribunal of the 16th century Spanish Inquisition – homophony, repetition, and to some degree unnatural scansion are all at play.

³⁴ This trait may not necessarily betray the underlying characteristics in obvious ways, but I see it as machine-like, industrial, and thus mass-produced; incidentally, see the description of the “water tank” below for further insights into my thinking along these lines.
3.4 Some Instrumental Motives and Textural Considerations

Some of the compositional techniques employed in Hover do draw on traditional operatic conventions, and in efforts to elucidate some significant dramatic concepts – both concrete and abstract – I found the use of musical signifiers necessary. These take the form of encoded musical references such as rising and descending lines and heartbeat rhythms (see Example 3.12), as well as some more obscure or originally “coined” musical metaphors concerning rhythms and textures. For example, I have already pointed out the significance of the composite harmony descending by a quarter-tone or semitone in the review of harmonic devices above; similarly, the rising chromatic line has a role to play, if not more than one, in telling the tale. In fact, these two devices set up a spectrum of directionality that is intended to embody various transitions between levels of consciousness, especially for The Dreamer.

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35 I’m speaking of the *leitmotif*, though this term may oversimplify the goals at hand.
37 The idea of attributing a *leitmotif* to a heartbeat is hardly original (see for example the tuplet motive in Strauss’s *Tod und Verklärung*); its potential use in this show, dramatically as stressor and relaxor, and musically as rhythmic propellant was, however, too great to pass up.
The first time we encounter the rising chromatic line is during The Dreamer’s descent into her anesthetized state in Act I, taking the form of an extended upwards gliss in the viola and slower chromatic rise in the vibraphone and guitar while the double bass moves downward by half-step, all of this set against a pedal D syncopated pulse (see Example 3.10). The decision to use a rising line to depict someone “going under” was made in part to show that she has detached from any sense of groundedness she may have possessed. Still in another way, it reflects rising to an out-of-body experience. Finally, it foreshadows her being lifted by her feet, prostrate, upwards to the ceiling at the end of Act II.

It may come as no surprise that the notion of directionality bears a great deal of weight in a piece entitled Hover. While the upwards leading chromatic line is perhaps a common symbol of movement in physical or conceptual vertical space, there are other rhythmic features that denote extra-musical ideas, though they may not be as direct in their abilities to reference a common or concrete idea to the average listener. It may be only the composer’s own motivations that formulate the shape and function of musical motives, but through multiple iterations, mutation, and self-referencing, the hope is that they aid in carrying ideas forth and supporting the dramatic form. Much in the same way that they constitute a sort of rhythmic DNA in pieces like Shadow Catch, the tuplet, winding its way

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38 Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 123.
across various metrical structures with contour and pulsation, has come to signify change and fluidity in my music. Given Hover’s aquatic setting, what better subject for a motivic rhythm defined by fluidity than water? In the show, water is used as both a prop (a medium in which a synchronized swimming ballet can take place) and a metaphor (a medium through which to transcend time, space, and consciousness), and the compositional treatment of the tuplet motive reflects this. Example 3.9 occurs during The Dreamer’s dream after The Traveler is accused. It is intended as an orchestrated ripple, a soothing force for her in this strange world, and as an announcement for the water ballet that will follow.

![Example 3.9](image)

During the climactic tableau of the piece, which happens in Act III Scene 2, the words “Room 401, Corridor D / Can’t contain you” are sung, referring both to The Dreamer’s hospital room, and to the hospital room where The Diver finally expires. The idea of containment – physical, spiritual, and how the two are related – is fundamental to the work, and it is no coincidence that water’s ephemeral quality is in direct contrast to this. The tension created by the opposing forces of containment and release is embodied

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onstage by the show’s central prop: a human-sized water tank. This indispensable object’s salient musical theme was composed to act in direct opposition to the horizontal, flowing quality of water’s tuplets. A “vertical”, hypermetrical superimposition of different themes results in a texture so thick that nearly each beat has an accent of some sort. The horizontal and vertical sonic crowding in the passage reflects the bonds that contain the various characters\(^{40}\) (note that this material surfaces again after The Diver’s punching routine in Act II Scene 2).

Texture is also used in dynamic ways to support transitions of both setting and mentality. More often than not, it is a pointillistic breaking apart of strata that proliferate separately from one main, loud sonic event.\(^{41}\) In Example 3.13, however, it is a simple thinning of attack density that is meant to “dissolve” the scene of the swimming lesson into a change of setting, namely, that of the hospital.

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\(^{40}\) One specific passage from the repertory that influenced my writing this part (particularly with regards to rhythm and grouping) was the mechanical nightingale theme in Stravinsky’s *Rossignol*.

Music theorist Stefan Kostka defines texture as “the relationships between the parts...at any moment in a composition”. Taking the idea of “breaking apart” and stretching it out across an over-arching form, texture can also take on a larger, dramatic meaning. Hover, like many works, is guided by the statement, deconstruction, exploration, and reconstruction of musical material. As the next chapter will demonstrate, however, it is also guided by dramatic forces that work along a similar trajectory of fragmentation and coming back together.

42 Ibid. p. 222.
This chapter re-introduces two concepts previously discussed in this document and incorporates them into the larger context of Hover’s form. The first – more of a reassertion of what Hover conveys in a meta-textual way (here I am speaking of the sum of its parts – concept, text, music, staging, performance, and interpretation) – concerns having one’s experience validated in the face of skepticism and how this is reflected in the work. The second concerns the notion of fusion that only began to be abstracted from the typical, musical definition at the end of Chapter Two into something more broad-reaching. In this case, fusion is defined not as the act of bringing two styles together so much as the act of bringing two perspectives together into the same viewpoint. The two concepts – validation of experience and merging of styles/perspectives – are in fact directly related insomuch as the first is effectuated by means of the second.

Musically speaking, perspective can be communicated through melody, rhythm, harmonic motion, and texture, in other words the principal materials enumerated in the previous section. As composer of this work, I saw a unique opportunity to “validate” the characters’ experiences both: by reflecting one’s material in the voices of others to demonstrate acceptance and understanding; and by developing the various motivic strands into something new over the course of the work to reflect their new, expanded views of the world. [Note: In the following sections, only a few examples are embedded directly in the discussion. As the passages in question are longer, please refer instead to the indicated measures in the score attached to this document.]

44 Salzman, *New Music Theater*, 322
4.1 The Climax of Act II: Fragmentation, Paralysis, and Musical Hyperbole

“For nothing can be sole or whole
That has not been rent”
-W.B. Yeats  

If Act I is about presenting the characters, their struggles, and their principal themes, Act II is about bringing them all to their own points of paralysis, or as The Diver puts it, “down to the ground”. This is the epitasis or middle action of the work for all three central characters, though in many ways their struggles remain separate from one another during this part. With The Traveler, the point of desperation is reached through his plaintive, pleading motives that go unheard, not to mention the physical act of torturing him which is very real in the onstage drama. We have already explored at length in Chapter II how The Diver’s material is fused and then fragmented during the punching that occurs backstage after his act, lending musical voice to his symbiotic-antagonistic relationship with his show persona – specifically with the water tank. As for The Dreamer, by this point she has been wandering about in a dream for some time trying to gain the attention of these two men to no avail, vaguely aware of the ordeal that awaits her. Her own fragmentation, both psychologically and motivically speaking, is a much more sudden, violent process, leaving her bloody and paralyzed on an operating table.

How does the music lead up to and accentuate this moment, which is in many ways the climax of the piece? Out of the final fragments of The Diver’s routine (at this point little

more than pulsed, offbeat remnants of his show music), a new pulse begins, complemented by an electrocardiogram sample (see mm. 790 – 800 and Example 3.12). A variant of the triplet-duple heartbeat motive that has occurred previously (see for example mm. 680 – 686), this serves as an ostinato through a fractured “reprise” of Act I Scene 2’s banal hospital banter (mm. 171 – 183), eventually becoming a sort of funeral march towards the appendectomy. Multiple musical devices are used through this section to accentuate her struggle and support the necessary dramatic build toward the climax (mm. 860 – 900):

• an unyielding pedal tone pulse, reflecting the unrelentingly rigid perspective of science and progress

• pronounced homophony in marcato phrases in the chorus, contrasting the horizontal, rising motion

• banality of banter between nurses, doctor, and anesthesiologist, creating a dramatic tension between them and The Dreamer’s panicked reality

• a prolonged increase in overall attack density

• importance of the chromatic rising line, both: in The Dreamer’s part, beginning with a low, controlled arioso melody and ending in an undefined high wail; and in the accompaniment triplet motive, now imbued with a terrible connotation.

Furthermore, the large-scale harmonic motion bears a striking resemblance to that which is outlined in the harmonic analysis of The Dreamer’s opening aria in the previous chapter. In fact, it is very nearly a direct transposition, upwards by one half-step of the second part of this phrase, informed by mediant and tritone motion and augmented Lydian modality (the former made up of E♭, B♭, F, D♭, and A tonal centers, the latter of D, F♯, C, E, and G♯.
ones). In other words, all the musical elements in this passage become exaggerated versions of themselves. Figure 3 shows the large scale harmonic motion and coinciding motivic features of this passage.

![Figure 3 - Large Scale Harmonic Motion and Corresponding Motivic Features](image)

The culmination of this passage, taking place in bar 898, has a function very similar to the late-Romantic Durchbruch: this singular (often dense and loud) sonic event symbolizes the unavoidable mechanisms of fate come to full fruition. Here, it is the result of the increasing tension between horizontal upwards motion and punctuated verticality, highlighting the rending of The Dreamer’s mind and body which she foretold in Act I. As the ensuing wave subsides (itself an exaggerated iteration of the pointillistic textural approach illustrated in Example 3.13), a soft pedal F#, coloured by high overtones and quiet, past motivic material, materializes. This functions as a textural background over which The Traveler and The Diver, finally seeing The Dreamer, sing a short segment of her material as a sotto voce duet while they pick up the broken pieces of her psyche, begin to bathe her, and initiate the healing process.

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4.2 Act III: Bringing the Elements Together

What follows is a purely instrumental transition between Acts II and III (mm. 930 – 960). This transition has a practical function – it allows for a possible set change without breaking the flow of the work – as well as formal functions: it offers a respite from the heightened drama of the previous passage; it supports a film made up of symbolic images such as The Dreamer holding her breath underwater and random childhood memories; and it depicts the beginning of a healing process that will lead to her reawakening. It does this in compound meter over a winding middle ground of largely diatonic eighth notes spelling out various modes by fusing segments of The Diver’s theme (3.6b) and The Traveler’s theme (3.7b) together in an extended, neo-Romantic harmonic progression that links the major key areas of D♭ and F major. The arrival point is marked by a very clear presentation of The Dreamer theme (see Examples 3.3b and 3.5).

This weaving together of disparate threads is an exceptional aspect of this pivotal passage, and it creates a precedent that the rest of the work will follow. However, it is not the first time traits of two motivic ideas are fused. Looking back across the events of Act II, the seeds of this tendency are first sewn in The Traveler’s melody that begins in bar 731 (also see Example 2.3f), recasting elements of The Dreamer’s theme as an old Spanish lullaby to symbolize a modicum of hope for him in his dark place. Eventually the three are drawn into the tune as a trio, and though they do not see each other, their counterpoint and harmony compels the belief that they are nonetheless there, together, functioning as one unit for the first time.
Returning to the prélude to Act III, then, as The Diver and The Traveler wash the blood from The Dreamer’s hospital gown in a pool of water, now seeing her struggle in clear light while previous motivic material is spun into something new by the orchestra, the process clearly becomes one of renewal. The characters have each overcome their own demons by acknowledging the struggles of others, and by having their own struggles acknowledged.

As the show moves towards its dénouement, this acknowledgement is reflected by the transference of motivic material from one character to another, by the clarification of said motivic material, and by its change through variation, intermotivic combination, and development.

The first scene of Act III doesn’t involve a strong forward propulsion of the drama. Instead, it functions as a slowly morphing tableau vivant during which The Dreamer reawakens in a quasi-metaphorical setting – the pool on the day she “went under” (though her dream characters are now present). At first it feels like a recapitulation. Simple, major diatonic harmonies give way to a syncopated pulse in the guitar that eventually spells out the same progression that underpinned The Dreamer’s opening aria. However, this time it is The Diver that sings; his material, more than just a simple variation, brings various segments of

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The Dreamer’s previous material (the triplet motive; the 5-1-2-3-2-7 motion) together into one cohesive melody that The Traveler eventually joins him in singing (see Example 4.1). My intention is that, despite it being a hybrid of various themes and their variations, given all that has previously transpired, this melody will be heard as both familiar and new. The choice of harmonic language – overtly tonal and repetitive – is meant to contrast the relative complexity of Act II by heralding the beginning of easier times. Finally, for the first time the chorus sings from the perspective of the main characters alongside them in homophony, exhibiting a unified front from the whole company.

At this point in the show, due to the particular dramatic occurrences, the transitions between drastically different settings, and the dream quality of the music, it is the creators’ intention that an overlapping of time and space won’t seem at all contestable from the audience perspective. For when The Dreamer awakes, she does so to assist the dénouement of her dream companions in this “in-between” space where all times and places run together, ultimately setting them free to go where they belong. Once again, it is by means of a transference of material between characters that their struggles are mutually acknowledged and their freedom secured. Her testimony, proving The Traveler’s innocence, unfolds with obvious allusions to both of his main themes (see Example 4.2). A stepwise rising and falling contour in the Lydian mode over a flowing texture in 11/8 time \((3+2+3+3 / 3+3+3+2)\) leads to a clear iteration of the “Ordinary Man” theme over the similar harmonic motion descending first to \(vi\) then to \(bVI\). This feel flows through a half-step step downwards modulation achieved through a pivot polychord of \(\text{G}_{\text{Ab}}\) directly into The Diver’s final moments, which are scored with a similar meter and a hybrid harmonic progression of the Traveler and Diver themes (mm. 1090 – 1137).
The Diver’s death is prolonged by a second *tableau vivant* (mm. 1142 – 1177), during which all elements fit together in thick counterpoint over an instrumental texture defined by both march-like rigidity and the undulating qualities of water. Here, and throughout this Act, the chorus takes on a decidedly more humanistic and accepting approach towards what is going on, proving that they too can transform along with the others. We have already seen this once at the end of Act III Scene 1, but it continues on by means of the following artistic decisions:

- Individual characters are explored in greater emotional depth; for example, the soprano shows hints of delight at The Dreamer’s testimony.
- The Doctor also displays great sympathy at The Diver’s bedside, absorbing and reflecting his melodic material (i.e. Traveler – Diver hybrid).
• Their text acknowledges and affirms the characters’ lived experience.

• Their homophony takes on a more positive quality; this is shown in the text being sung in these moments, as well as by the inclusion of the three main characters in the homophony, showing again a cohesion of material and perspective.

Finally, The Diver, proven mortal after all, is released from his body, unable to be contained any longer by the world; The Traveler boards his boat and sets sail for the Philippines; and The Dreamer returns to the present day. Her flashback is over, and she speaks with confidence into her field recorder, journaling observations on her recovery: “What I know is this/…This is my body/…That is what happened/ I am alive/ I am awake.” The music, fittingly, is an impressionistic wash of fragments of previous material (mm. 1191 – 1245) – the “Ordinary Man” theme, The Diver’s themes (“Just me just a man” and his swimming lesson/show music material), and the water ripples theme, all glued together by a sustained, tremolo diatonic cluster in the vibraphone and a new, syncopated “vamp” ostinato softly strummed by the violist. As The Dreamer swims confidently to show her renewed mental and physical health, her main theme – now the show’s main theme – is sung by all. Here, the four bar phrase from Example 3.5 has been completed and even extended by a short coda, reflecting in its hymn-like simplicity and hushed reverence the new-found clarity the characters possess, as well as their collective willingness to believe in what they now know to be true.
Concerning Interdisciplinarity in Music Theatre, Redux – Workshopping and Staging

For many reasons, the workshopping phase has become a crucial step in bringing a work of music theatre from page to stage (often including additional steps of back to page, back to stage, and so on). This is as much to demonstrate a work’s development history to possible financial backers as it is to glean insight into necessary revisions on the creative level. With the assistance of an academic grant, Ms. Cuff and I had the opportunity both to hear Hover’s music in a piano-vocal read through and explore the challenges (and advantages) inherent to staging Hover in its originally intended performance venue – that of an indoor swimming pool – during a staging workshop. Taking place at the Jewish Community Centre of Greater Vancouver Aquatic Centre with full cast and ensemble, this staging workshop had the following main objectives:

- to gauge vocal (semantic) and musical (harmonic/rhythmic/melodic) audibility for performers and audience within reverberatory and other noise-related, acoustic constraints of the space from various distances and spatialized formats
- to determine the degree and possible effect of other location-related performance constraints: vocal performance while half-submerged; theatrical blocking logistics of a partially aquatic stage area; and the effect of humidity and water contact on instrumental factors such as temperament and electronics
- to explore how orchestrational methods function acoustically in the space
- to attempt to gauge the experiential benefits of witnessing a production in a venue so closely related to Hover’s concept and primary setting.

The final component of this workshop was a partially-staged presentation of twenty minutes-worth of material from Act I to a “test” audience of approximately forty individuals. The data collected during this process confirmed and revealed many
challenges, including: the disorientation of performers due to acoustics, room noise, humidity, and temperature; obstacles to both blocking and visuals, such as slides, posts, and windows; and venue constraints, such as circuit capacity, facility hours, and other regulations. Through feedback and observation, Ms. Cuff and I gained insight into the work that, in addition to a better understanding of the vicissitudes listed above, also resulted in many constructive changes to its libretto and score. Among other revisions these included the incorporation of synchronized swimmers into the action to add a choreographed layer of expression and facilitate aquatic movement for singers, as well as score-related edits, such as the addition of a water ballet and the enhanced role of sustained background texture to reflect the impressionistic “wash” of pool acoustics. Finally, it was determined that staging the work in an indoor pool was not mandatory in communicating its underlying concepts. Presenting the work in a traditional theatre (though with a pool constructed inside) might offer many advantages in terms of acoustic control, humidity, lighting and projection capability, staff, and venue access, among others. Taking these findings into consideration, Hover will continue to be workshopped at least once more before the creative team seeks ways of bringing it to full production.

Illustration 1 – Hover Staging Workshop Presentation, July 2012. Below, Megan Morrison is seen in the role of The Dreamer, and Joshua McFaul in that of The Traveler (from Act I Scene 3). For more photos of this workshop, please see Appendix A. *photo by Diane Smithers © 2012, Diane Smithers*
Closing Remarks

In no other medium do so many artistic elements come into simultaneous collaboration as in music theatre and opera (with the exception of perhaps film, and here the potential for future collaboration ceases to exist once the product is manufactured). With music theatre, the creation of the fixed form of the product – that is to say the score – is only the beginning of the work’s life. As the contemporary musicologist Björn Heile points out: “The insight that the musical work cannot be equated with a score and that performance is more than the execution of an ideally self-sufficient text...is nowhere as seemingly self-evident as in opera. For a serious engagement with opera as a dramatic spectacle, performance must be seen as primary and the score principally as the incarnation of potential performances.”49 Far from content to leave the work in this idealized “score” state, I have sought ways to hear and see Hover through workshopping during the creative process, and I intend to see it to full production at some point in the future.

Despite this notion of the work not truly existing until it is in the hands of performers and in the ears of the audience, however, I cannot consider the process of its musical composition as anything less than central. No longer in the dark, I can now see the compositional effort such a piece requires to be daunting,50 and the responsibility of its composer immense on many levels. To me, this responsibility meant honouring Ms. Cuff’s concept, staying true to my own musical temperament, and bringing my particular experience within the music theatre genre to the table. I believe I have upheld these

50 Hover’s composition was begun in the spring of 2009 and completed in the spring of 2013.
goals, and in doing so completed a written work whose many elements – libretto, stage directions, and musical materials – are now, with my contribution, fused inextricably into one object: the score. My hope and estimation is that it will not only withstand imprints of (hopefully) many future interpreters, but inspire them to fresh perspectives, innovative approaches, and new methods of bringing it to life.
Bibliography


Citron, Paula. “Opera Outside the Box: Toronto’s Queen of Puddings has its own Distinctive take on Music Theater.” *Opera Canada* 44 (2003): 14-17.


Appendix A: Additional Workshop Photos

All photos by Diane Smithers, © 2012, Diane Smithers

These photos were taken from a presentation workshop of scenes from Act I of Hover. The workshop took place on July 5, 2012 at the Jack Belzberg Pool at the Jewish Community Centre of Greater Vancouver. The workshop participants were as follows:

Music Director: Marguerite Witvoet
Stage Director: Richard Wolfe
Videography: Yana Kehrlein
Sound recording and diffusion: Jon Bitze
The Dreamer: Megan Morrison
The Traveler: Joshua McFaul
The Diver: Alex McMorran
Nurse/Inquisitor 1: Lucy Smith
Nurse/Inquisitor 2: Melanie Adams
Doctor/Inquisitor: Shane Raman
Anesthesiologist/Head Inquisitor: Steven Bélanger
Violin: Molly MacKinnon
Clarinet/Bass Clarinet: Caroline Gauthier
Electric Guitar: Adrian Verdejo
Double-bass: Mark Haney
Percussion: Brian Nesselroad
Swimmer 1/choreography: Courtenay Grant
Swimmer 2: Aly Plecash

from Act I Scene 1
from Act I Scene 3

from Act I Scene 2
Appendix B: Libretto

HOVER: A Music Theatre Work in Three Acts
libretto by Lindsay Cuff

Introduction to Characters and Setting

Principal Characters:

The Dreamer, female, age 34, from the present

The Traveler, male, age 30, from the 16th century

The Diver, male, age 52, from the turn of the 20th century

Chorus:

2 women (Nurse 1, Nurse 2, Members of Tribunal)
2 men (Doctor, Anesthesiologist, Head of Tribunal, Member of Tribunal, Puncher)

Setting: A public swimming pool
Synopsis

The word hoax is said to have come from the magic incantation “Hocus Pocus,” which is said to be a distortion of “Hoc est Corpus” (this is the body).

What happens when our bodies do things that are not possible: great escapes from enclosed chambers, travel from one side of the world to the other in a minute, or wakefulness during surgery? What happens when we tell our stories and no one believes our experiences of truth or pain? There is sometimes a gap between what “is” and what we personally know to be true. I am here but I am not. I hover but I sink so far.

This is the story of a woman, the Dreamer, and her struggle to come to terms with a traumatic event that took place one year ago. The opera begins with a swimming lesson that dissolves into a flashback/memory of the traumatic event, a “waking” during surgery. Through recalling the events, the Dreamer meets two important men from two different centuries. These men, the Traveler and the Diver, have also experienced moments where their bodies have performed seemingly impossible feats.

The characters undergo a journey in which they must confront issues related to personal narrative. They face profound skepticism in the telling of their own stories and become paralyzed and suspended in a moment where neither emotional nor physical movement is possible. All three must find a way to cope in the face of this skepticism and slowly and intentionally begin to dismantle cultural myths and prove that their personal stories are true and hold weight.
ACT I, Scene 1
The DREAMER walks onto the stage. She is wearing a bathing suit and holding a field recorder. Ambient sound is heard from a swimming pool. People splashing and talking, whistles blowing. She puts down her recorder and jumps into the water. A video image is projected of her underwater and all that is heard is the hum of being underwater. As she sinks to the bottom, she opens her mouth and bubbles stream out. She flails her arms and comes splashing to the surface. The video ends as she surfaces. She pulls herself out of the water and sits on the stage and tries to catch her breath. She picks up the field recorder and records her breathing. She records the ambient sound of the room. She speaks into the recorder.

DREAMER
October, 2006.
I’m 34. I live alone.
I used to work but now I stay at home.
A year ago something happened,
something I can’t explain,
something that I cannot prove
something that no one will believe
but I know it’s true.
It started in this very pool.
I collapsed in pain,
as rushed to the hospital,
for a routine procedure—
they do them everyday.

The Hospital says nothing happened.
The surgery went exactly as planned—
I went underwater, I came up—
but I know that’s not true.
Something happened in the in-between,
when I was lying on the table.
Something horrible.
Something broke between my mind and body
that left me dead inside
I can’t sleep at night but I dream

when I’m awake
it’s like I’m dreaming,
and I dream only to wake
in other times, other lives.
I don’t know what’s real anymore.
I keep going back to that day
that started in this pool
I came for a swimming lesson.
The swimming instructor (the DIVER) enters. MEMBERS of the CHORUS enter, also dressed in bathing suits. The DREAMER clicks off the tape recorder and puts it down.

DIVER
How are you this week?

DREAMER
Not bad.

DIVER
Have you been practicing your strokes?

DREAMER
A little.

DIVER
Well...shall we?

The Diver blows the lifeguard whistle. Members of the CHORUS enter, also dressed in bathing suits. Two CHORUS MEMBERS dive into the water. The DREAMER stays on the stage, watching.

DIVER
When you’re moving your arms
and you’re kicking your feet
Don’t let yourself sink
When you’re a swimmin’
and a glidin’
Feelin’ so free
Don’t you sink down under

CHORUS
Enter, exit shallow water
jump into deeper water
exit and return
submerge, hold breath
open eyes underwater
exhale through mouth and nose ten times

ALL
1 one thousand
The stage becomes the meeting place of two worlds. The swimming pool and the hospital. All text in the rest of the scene overlaps.

CHORUS
Enter, exit shallow water
jump into deeper water
exit and return
submerge, hold breath
open eyes underwater
exhale through mouth
and nose ten times

ALL
1 one thousand
2 one thousand
3 one thousand
4 one thousand

DREAMER
You go under, you come up

DIVER
When your face is in the water
and you don’t know how to breathe
Just try not to drown.
Cause swimming can be lonesome
and blue as can be
So try not to sink.

CHORUS MEMBER
What to pack for your hospital stay:

1. Pack a bag with your essentials. In addition to comfortable pajamas, pack comfortable clothing and shoes to wear home, toiletries and anything else you may need, such as a book or music.

CHORUS
submerge, hold breath
open eyes underwater
exhale through mouth
and nose ten times

ALL
  1 one thousand
  2 one thousand
  3 one thousand
  4 one thousand

DREAMER
  You go under, you come up.

CHORUS MEMBER
  2. Be sure to leave your jewelry, credit cards, cash and any other valuables at home. The staff will not be able to protect your belongings while you are in surgery and they will be vulnerable to theft or loss.

DREAMER
  You go under

CHORUS MEMBER
  3. Don’t forget to take your insurance card, personal identification and a list of any medications you are currently taking with the dosage you are taking.

CHORUS
  enter  exit
  exit   return
  submerge  hold

DREAMER
  You come up

CHORUS
  open
  exhale
  recover

DREAMER
  But something happened.
  Something happened.

ALL
  1 one thousand
  2 one thousand
  3
ACT I, Scene 2

A pulse from an electrocardiogram begins. The DREAMER appears as if in pain, clutching her abdomen. She looks to the DIVER for help but he doesn’t seem to see her. She continues to double over in pain.

The chorus becomes the SURGICAL TEAM. They are engaged in banal conversation.

DOCTOR
  What time is it?

NURSE 2
  13:56.

DOCTOR
  Last shift before I go on vacation.

NURSE 1
  Nice. Where are you going?

DOCTOR
  Mexico. All-inclusive.

ANESTHESIOLOGIST
  The wife and I did that last year. Non-stop booze, tacos and bikinis.

NURSE 2
  You’re disgusting.

ANESTHESIOLOGIST
  And you don’t know how to have—

DREAMER (still doubled over in pain)
  So? What’s wrong?

DOCTOR
  It’s your appendix. There’s been a rupture.

An operating table is wheeled in and the DREAMER is placed on it. The surgical team hook the DREAMER up to electrodes and cords attached to the ceiling. The ANESTHESIOLOGIST puts a breathing mask over her face. The rest of the team continues to prepare the DREAMER for surgery.
ANESTHESIOLOGIST
    Now count down from ten for me, sweetheart.

NURSE 2
    She’s not your sweetheart.

DREAMER
    10-9-8-7

ANESTHESIOLOGIST
    What’s wrong with you? Why do you have to be like that?

DOCTOR
    Ok guys, cool it.

NURSE 1
    Oh hey, where’d you say you’re going in Mexico?

DOCTOR
    Puerto Vallarta.

ANESTHESIOLOGIST
    How do the Mexicans pronounce it? Poo-eeehrrrr-to Vah-yarrrr-ta?

NURSE 2
    Can you just stop opening your mouth?

DOCTOR
    Ok seriously, that’s enough. For the next few minutes, no one speaks.

The TRAVELER comes from the pool and onto the stage. He is wearing a military uniform. He looks out over the water, examines his hands, his feet, trying to figure out what has just happened to him. He walks around the operating table until the ANESTHESIOLOGIST notices him.

ANESTHESIOLOGIST
    YOU!
ACT I, Scene 3

The TRAVELER freezes. The surgical team walks away from the operating table and the DREAMER. They are transformed into the TRIBUNAL of the Inquisition.

CHORUS

Approach the bench
of the most holy
the most worthy
the truth, the only
Tribunal of the Inquisition

MEMBER of TRIBUNAL (NURSE 1)

Your supremacy, this man claims he does not know where he is. He says he was in Las Islas Filipinas yesterday morning, which you know, which I know, which God knows cannot be. For we are now in Mexico City, the next evening, October 25, 1593. He’s been brought before us under charges of heresy, which you know, which I know, which God knows must be. He claims that he is innocent.

HEAD of TRIBUNAL (ANESTHESIOLOGIST)

Approach this most righteous bench
El Tribunal del Santo Oficio
de la Inquisicion en Mexico

ALL

We have been chosen by God.
Approach.
Walk forward.
Come forth, confess your faith.
Approach the Most Holy
Proclaim your auto da fé.

HEAD

I’ve heard the evidence against you
There are Christians who saw you

ALL

Lying in the centre of the Plaza Mayor
attired in a uniform from across the sea

HEAD

from the Spanish Army
in service of the country on the trade route of the people of the
ALL

Philippines!

The TRIBUNAL shuffles around. They whisper to each other. They point at him. The TRAVELER walks over to the DREAMER. She sits up and listens to him. He is confused and desperate and begins to plead his case.

TRAVELER

I drink coffee every morning with sleep still in my eyes
Go to work each day, make sure my boots are shined.
Before I leave I kiss my wife on the neck
I tell you for certain, I’m an ordinary man

ALL

Approach the bench
of the most holy
the most worthy
the truth, the only
Tribunal of the Inquisition

HEAD

We’ve heard the evidence against you
There are Christians who saw you

ALL

You proclaim you are not from this place,
You state you don’t know how it happened
You insist you traveled across the sea
instantly, in the time a cock takes to crow.

HEAD

Approach the bench this is not possible.
With no boat you cannot travel

ALL

What have you done?
Where are you from?
Who sent you to speak these words?
Who whispered them in your ear?
Traveler of so many lies!
TRAVELER
Rain falls in my collar, with sleep still in my eyes
I jump over each puddle, my boots don’t lose their shine.
Stand guard at the palace, my collar wet against my neck
I tell you for certain, I’m an ordinary man.

ALL
Approach this most righteous bench.
El tribunal del Santo Oficio
de la Inquisicion en Mexico.
We have been chosen by God.

TRAVELER
I get into bed, the sleep in my eyes
See my wife’s body, each drop of sweat shines
Her hands anchor me, hold the back of my neck
You must believe it, I’m an ordinary man.

ALL
What have you done?
Where are you from?
Who sent you to speak these words?
Who whispered them in your ear?
Traveler of so many lies!

The TRAVELER turns and faces the TRIBUNAL, addressing them directly. 

TRAVELER
Listen. Listen! Escuchame!

The TRIBUNAL does not listen to him but flank the TRAVELER on each side and begin to drag him away. The Traveler keeps pleading as they prepare his bonds.

TRAVELER
I do not know where I am.
I do not know how I got here.
Last night, in a country called the Philippines
I stood guard at the palace.
This morning I arrived in a place far from home,
you say it’s Mexico.
(pause)
You must believe me.
I am not who you say I am
I am an ordinary, ordinary man.
ALL
You are not.
You are not.
You are not.

HEAD
You are evil.
You’re a witch.
You do not truly see.
You must not be
allowed among us.
Servant of Satan,
have you no fear?
Vessel of darkness
You must be contained.
Put him in the cell.
LOCK HIM AWAY.

*The TRAVELER is bound and dragged to the side of the stage. The TRIBUNAL exit. The DREAMER gets up. The TRAVELER yells to her.*

TRAVELER
I’m telling the truth!

*The DREAMER doesn’t hear the TRAVELER. Instead, She walks over to the edge of the pool where a dream-like water ballet is taking place.*

**ACT I, Scene 4**
*The DIVER suddenly interrupts the reverie. He is dressed as a showman and begins addressing his audience with gusto.*

DIVER
Ladies and Gentlemen
Ladies and Gentlemen
Boys and Girls
Boys and Girls
What you are about to see
is me.

If you do not truly see
you will not see me.
Magic
Magic
Magic
requires iron nerve
perfect movement
strong muscle
rejection of fear
rejection of pain.

Magic
Magic
Magic
requires iron nerve
precise movement
Perfect fear,
Perfect pain.

I present to you
my own invention
my perfect descention
into what I call
“The Chinese
Water
Torture
Cell!”

The DIVER ceremoniously readies himself for the feat, stripping down into a bathing suit. The SWIMMERS enter and walk over to the tank with hoses, adding more water. The DIVER confidently raises his arms, signaling applause. The SWIMMERS and the DREAMER cheer. He dramatically drops his hands to his side, signaling an end to the applause.

Ladies and Gentlemen
Boys and Girls
What you’re about to see
contains no trickery.
If you do not truly see
you will not see me.

He lies down on the stage with his feet in the air. The SWIMMERS lock his feet into a harness that is attached to a rope suspended from the ceiling. The rope is pulled and the DIVER is dragged upwards by his feet. Everything fades to silence as the SWIMMERS and the DREAMER cheer in silence and slow motion.
DIVER

No magical way to escape,
no secret trick.
I’ve trained my lungs to hold breath
for as long as I need,
I’ve taught my body to move in ways
thought impossible.
But they are possible
because I do them every night.

DIVER, TRAVELER, DREAMER

(Spotlight on Traveler, alone in chains at the far end of the stage)
Breathe in, Breathe out, Breathe slow.

DIVER

The thing that no one knows
that is hard to truly know
is that every time I go in
I wonder if I’ll emerge.

Tonight I’m in pain,
my right ankle is sore.
Maybe tonight will be the time.
The time I don’t come out.

When people realize
it’s always been me.
Nothing supernatural,

Just me, just a man, just a routine
Just an ordinary human
Breathe in, breathe out, breathe slow
Just me, just a man, just a routine.
Feel the water. Sink down deep.

The rope is released gradually, lowering the DIVER head-first toward the water cell.

DIVER, TRAVELER, DREAMER
Breathe in, Breathe out, Breathe slow.

DIVER
Concentrate, must concentrate.
Feel each muscle, each tiny vein
until they all float away.
Breathe slow.

Enter the chains. Enter the pain.
Empty my mind. Empty it all.

Enter the chains. Enter the pain.
Empty my mind. Empty it all.

*The DIVER is plunged into the cell. The theatre goes black except for a light that shines on the SURGICAL TEAM gathered around the operating table and the DREAMER standing by the water tank. The DIVER’S heartbeat pulses.*

DIVER, TRAVELER, DREAMER

Breathe

DIVER

I’m bound. I’m here. I’m nowhere.

DIVER, TRAVELER, DREAMER

Breathe in, Breathe out, Breathe.

*The Diver’s heartbeat turns into the EKG machine, getting faster and louder. The DREAMER begins banging on the water tank.*

DREAMER

Stop. Don’t. Don’t go under.
Stop! Don’t! Don’t go under! Stop!
ACT II, Scene 1

The TRAVELER is pulled out of the water cell. He is gasping for breath. The TRIBUNAL pushes him onto his knees, places a silk scarf in his mouth and ties it around his head. The DREAMER remains in front of the water tank. The tribunal slowly pours water down the Traveler’s throat.

TRIBUNAL

You say you traveled a distance
that takes a ship 80 days
in only a single instant.
Confess how you did it.

Renounce the Devil
Come toward God
Step away from darkness
and into the light

Confess
Confess

The pouring stops and the scarf is removed from the TRAVELER’S mouth. The TRAVELER sputters and spits water, leaning forward to catch his breath. He sways his head around in circles, clearly confused. The Tribunal ring out the scarf, scarcely listening to him.

TRAVELER

Please! I am not who you think I am.
I have no idea how I got here.
I don’t know what I’ve done.
Maybe something happened in my sleep,
maybe something took control—
But no. No! It’s not possible, it’s not. No.
Please, please.
Everything I told you before is true.
I beg you.
Please!
Please!

The scarf is placed back in the TRAVELER’S mouth. The cycle of pouring begins again. Spotlight on the DIVER behind a scrim, dripping wet, standing on top of the “Chinese Water Torture Cell.” He is facing away from the audience towards an “imaginary” audience, situating the house backstage. He raises his hands in triumph. Applause is heard offstage. The DIVER swings down on a rope. He does not see the DREAMER. He walks to a “dressing room” on the side of the stage. The DREAMER follows but keeps her distance. The CHORUS stop torturing the TRAVELER, suddenly interested by the DIVER.
The CHORUS whisper among themselves as they walk over to the DIVER.

CHORUS
There he is! Ask him! Ask him!

One CHORUS MEMBER is pushed forward.

CHORUS MEMBER
We want to know how. How is it possible? How did you do it?

CHORUS
Was it magic?

The DIVER interrupts.

DIVER
Ladies and Gentlemen
I have one thing to say
One thing I want to
speak about today.

You must be careful,
there are those in each town
who profess to possess special powers,
would have you believe in their ability
to channel the supernatural,
a land beyond the grave.

But I tell you this for certain,
there’s nothing real about them
It is all tricks and lies,
manipulation and deceit.

The only thing that is real
is the living human body
and all it is capable of.
It is the sum of all we know,

DIVER AND DREAMER
All we can experience

This is all there is.
This is all there is.

DIVER
So step right up.
Show me what you got.
Show the strength
of my body
my arms
legs
gut
A punch to connect,
a punch to take me out.

Step right up.
Show me what you got
You heard me,
who will throw a punch?

CHORUS
Punch him! You!

* A MEMBER of the CHORUS is selected by the others and thrust forward. *

CHORUS
Punch him!

* He swaggers up to the DIVER and punches him in the gut. Everything is still while everyone waits to see if the DIVER is harmed. There is a collective exhale as the DIVER stands up tall. Everyone applauds. *

DIVER
So step right up.
Show me what you got.
Show the strength
of my body
my arms
legs
gut
A punch to connect,
a punch to take me out.

Step right up.
Show me what you got
You heard me,
who will throw a punch?

CHORUS
PUNCH!

A different MEMBER of the CHORUS is thrust forward. He walks over to the DIVER and, after a moment’s hesitation, punches him in the gut. There is a pause—the DIVER takes longer to recover this time.

DIVER’S VOICE (Phonograph recording)
You see, I have been underground
tried to speak with the dead
my mother, my father, my friends.
What I know is this:

DIVER AND DREAMER
Look around, feel your pulse,
the rise and the fall
This is all there is.

The DIVER stands up, the CHORUS applauds and then, bored, they go back to torturing the TRAVELER. The DIVER lets down his guard. He is tired and slumped over.

Spotlight on the TRAVELER.

TRIBUNAL
Only you can make it stop.
Only you can request the grace of God.

Admit your lies,
turn your face to the Lord.
Be gone Satan,
in Jesus Christ’s name.
CONFESS.
CONFESS.
CONFESS.

The pouring stops and the scarf is again removed from the TRAVELER’S mouth. The TRAVELER falls on his face and crawls toward edge of the stage, desperate. He is sputtering and crying. The TRIBUNAL laughs.

TRAVELER
¿Soy malvado?
¿Un discípulo de Satan?
Are my hands,
the hands that bathe my daughter,
 servants of the Devil?
Has she been harmed?
Have I harmed her without knowing?

What have I done?!

¡Contésteme!
Answer me, God!
¡Contésteme!

Have you abandoned me?
How did this happen?
¿Como?
¡¿Como?!

The TRAVELER sees the DREAMER and goes over to her.

Oh my child, my child, my baby.
Estoy tu papa.
Desculpame. Desculpame.
Por favor, mi niña
Por favor.

The DREAMER turns her attention from the DIVER and speaks to the TRAVELER for the first time.

DREAMER
You shouldn’t be here.

TRAVELER
Duermete, mi niña
Duermete solita
que cuando despiertes
estará alla.

DREAMER
Don’t let them do this to you.

TRAVELER
Duermete, mi niña
Duermete, mi sol
que cuando despiertes
estará alla.

DREAMER
You shouldn’t be here
Don’t fall asleep
Try to escape
I’ll be here to help you.

Don’t let them do this to you.

DIVER
Just bring me down to the ground
I’m so very tired.
Tired of the in between
in between life
in between
Connect me to life
or connect me to death

DIVER AND DREAMER
I’ve held my breath
underwater far too long.

A member of the CHORUS begins to walk toward the DIVER. The DIVER, showing signs of injury but with bravado all the same, sings to himself or to no one in particular. He is in his won world and does not notice the man walking toward him.

DIVER
So step right up.
Show me what you got.
Show the strength
of my body
my arms
legs
gut
A punch to connect,
a punch to take me out.

The DREAMER realizes that the man is about to punch the DIVER and tries to warn him. He doesn’t hear her and keeps singing to himself.
DIVER
Step right up.
Show me what you got
You heard me,
who will throw a punch?

DREAMER
PUNCH!

*The DIVER turns his head at the DREAMER’S warning and notices the man near him on stage.
He addresses him directly.*

Take me down.

*The CHORUS also sees the DREAMER and goes to her. There is a struggle as they take hold of her, drag her over to the operating table and pin her down.*

Take me down.

*The man punches the DIVER.*

ACT II, Scene 2
The sound of a cardiogram beat starts. The DIVER falls on the floor, the DREAMER goes limp and the surgical team begins surgery. The point of view (POV) of the DREAMER is projected (i.e. the heads of the surgical team bent over her, operating). The dialogue is fragmented. The movements of the surgical team on stage mirror that of the video.

DOCTOR
Time.

NURSE 1
13:56.

DOCTOR
Last shift

NURSE 1
Where are you ?

DOCTOR
Mexico.
ANESTHESIOLOGIST
the wife and

NURSE 2
You

ANESTHESIOLOGIST
you don’t know

DOCTOR
I’m afraid we’ll

ANESTHESIOLOGIST
count down from ten

DOCTOR
appendix

ANESTHESIOLOGIST
non-stop

NURSE 2
She’s not your

DOCTOR
rupture

NURSE 2
sweetheart

DOCTOR
We’ll have to take

ANESTHESIOLOGIST
What’s wrong with you?

DOCTOR
cool it.

NURSE 1
Mexico?

DOCTOR
Puerto Vallarta.
ANESTHESIOLOGIST
   Poo-eeehrrrr-to Vah-yarrr-ta

NURSE 2
   just stop

DOCTOR
   that’s enough. Ten blade.

DREAMER
   Wait. Something’s wrong.

*The NURSE hands the DOCTOR the knife.*
Everything on stage gets gradually darker except for a dramatic spot on the DREAMER. The rest of the performers can’t be seen.

NURSE 1
   Ten blade.

DREAMER
   No, really. Something’s wrong.
   I can see that knife.
   (Pause)
   Did you hear me?

*The surgical team does not hear or see the DREAMER.*

ANESTHESIOLOGIST
   Countdown.

DOCTOR
   Cool it.

DREAMER
   Don’t you hear what I’m saying?

NURSE 2
   Can you just stop opening your mouth?

DOCTOR
   All right, I’m going in.

*The DOCTOR brings the knife closer and closer to her abdomen.*
DREAMER
   No. What are you doing?
   I’m awake.
   I can hear you.
   No. Stop. STOP!
   DON’T!

The DOCTOR makes the incision. The DREAMER sits right up. Blood starts to spread on her hospital gown. The stage is completely dark except for the spot on the DREAMER and the video projection. The video of the DREAMER’s POV looking up at the surgical team keeps playing as if the surgery is going on normally.

DREAMER
   STOP!
   I’m burning!

ANESTHESIOLOGIST
   Why do you have to be like that?

NURSE 2
   What’s wrong with you?

DREAMER
   STOP!
   STOP!
   STOP!
   I’M BURNING!

NURSE 1
   Shall we have a drink after work?

NURSE 2
   Can’t. I have a date.

DREAMER
   STOP!

ANESTHESIOLOGIST
   Oh, too bad.

NURSE 2
   Shut up.
DREAMER
   NO! NO! STOP! STOP!

DOCTOR
   I’m up for it. Let’s just finish this off.

The DREAMER begins to rise to the ceiling.

ALL
10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1

DREAMER
   I AM AWAKE! I AM—

The DREAMER’S hands are released from the cords holding them. The DREAMER hangs from
the ceiling by her feet as if executed. The surgical team exit.

The DIVER and the TRAVELER enter. The DIVER pulls her down and releases her feet. The
DIVER and the TRAVELER carry her to the edge of the pool. The DIVER and the TRAVELER
bathe the DREAMER with the pool water. They wash off the blood.

TRAVELER
   Duermete, mi niña
   Duermete solita
   que cuando despiertes
   estará alla.

They comfort her. They stroke her hair.

DIVER
   I hear you. I see you.
   Something’s wrong.
   I hear you.

DIVER and TRAVELER
   We can see you.
   Something’s wrong.
   I know something’s wrong.
   I know something’s wrong.
   I know.

The contrast in the POV video projection of the surgery increases until all that can be seen is the
surgical light. The surgical light becomes a light at the surface of the water. The video is still the
DREAMER’s POV but this time she is under water. The light gets bigger and bigger as she
moves up towards the light, towards the surface. Towards the bottom of a boat.
ACT III, Scene 1

The video ends as the TRAVELER and the DIVER place the DREAMER onto a boat/raft in the water. The swimmers start a slow water ballet.

CHORUS MEMBER 1 (repeated throughout)
   Head, Shoulders, Knees, Toes
   Eyes, Ears, Mouth, Nose
   Head, Shoulders, Knees, Toes
   Eyes, Ears, Mouth, Nose

DREAMER’S VOICE (from the tape recorder)
   I’m 34. I live alone.
   I used to work but now I stay at home.
   A year ago something happened,
   something I can’t explain,
   something that I cannot prove
   something that no one will believe
   but I know it’s true.
   It started in this very pool.

DIVER
   When the water’s cold
   when the nights are long
   when my body’s dying
   will you sing a song

   Will you stay with me
   all through the night
   and hold me through the winter
   through the failing light

   Hold me.
   Hold me.

CHORUS MEMBER 2
   In all strokes there comes a point where your hand stops moving forward and starts pulling back past your body and against the water. This stage of the stroke is known as the catch and it's at this point that getting a good hold of the water is most crucial. In an ideal world you would be able to anchor your hand stationary in the water, so that as you exert a force your hand doesn't move relative to the poolside, but instead stays still as your body moves past this point. Of course this being the real world it's not as easy as it sounds. It can seem easier just to let the water go, particularly at the end of a stroke, but you need to make as much out of each movement as you can.
DIVER and TRAVELER
When the water’s cold
when the nights are long
when my body’s dying
will you sing a song

Will you stay with me
all through the night
and hold me through the winter
through the failing light

Hold me.
Hold me.

ALL
Hold it all in your hands
Hold it at the back of your lungs
Hold it as you swim and try to get it right
Try to hold it long enough

The chorus members get out of the pool. The DIVER walks towards the operating table and lies down. The TRAVELER goes back behind the water cell.

ACT III, Scene II
The TRIBUNAL enters, whispering and talking among themselves. The HEAD of the TRIBUNAL enters majestically.

MEMBER 3
Your excellency
Most holy,
Oh righteous Head

HEAD
Speak.

MEMBER 3
Have you heard?

HEAD
What is it?
MEMBER 2
    A boat.

HEAD
    A boat?

MEMBER 1
    A boat.

HEAD
    That is all?

MEMBER 3
    A boat has arrived.

ALL
    From the Philippines!

_The DREAMER steps off the raft onto the stage._

MEMBER 3
    Someone has arrived

ALL
    On the boat from the Philippines!

MEMBER 2
    He heard talk of the prisoner,
    Claims he knows who he is.

HEAD
    Bring the prisoner in!

_The TRAVELER is brought out from behind the water cell. He looks at the DREAMER, confused._

DREAMER
    I know this man.

_The TRIBUNAL stand together, stern and skeptical._

HEAD
    But tell me, when did you last see him, this prisoner, this heretic?
DREAMER
   The morning before we set sail from Manila, Philippines
   is the last time I saw him.
   How he came to be here, I am sure I do not know
   But I tell you for certain, I know from where he comes.
   He is not a heretic.

   He is an ordinary man.

_The TRIBUNAL begin loudly whispering and talking amongst themselves._

TRAVELER
   I am an ordinary man.

_The TRIBUNAL fades, scurrying to the back of the stage._

HOSPITAL PA
   Room 401, corridor D.
   Room 401, Corridor D.

_The DOCTOR enters and sits down beside the DIVER._

DOCTOR
   I am sorry.

DIVER
   For what?

DOCTOR
   I am sorry.

DREAMER
   You are?

DIVER
   There was nothing you could do.

DOCTOR
   I know it’s not enough.

DREAMER
   Couldn’t you have stopped it?
DIVER
   Everyone has a final fight.

DOCTOR
   Even you?

DIVER
   Especially me.

DOCTOR
   But you’re the great magician.

DIVER
   I’d rather be someone else. Someone like you.

DOCTOR
   But everyone loves you.

DIVER
   Don’t you see?
   There’s nothing magic about what I do.
   Just me, alone night after night,
   suspended between death and life.

DOCTOR
   That’s not true.

DREAMER
   You just don’t see.

DIVER
   Look, look at me.
   I’m the greatest performer of all time
   but I’m a man who has cheated death too long.
   Today is not defeat,
   I will finally be released.
   Will you stay with me?

DREAMER
   As long as I can.

*The sound of a pulse through a hospital machine is heard. The TRAVELER and DREAMER are on a separate part of the stage.*
HOSPITAL PA
   Room 401, Corridor D.

DREAMER, DIVER and TRAVELER
   I am here.
   I am here.
   I am nowhere.

CHORUS
   Room 401, Corridor D

DOCTOR
   Cannot hold you.

HOSPITAL PA
   Room 401, Corridor D

CHORUS
   Can’t enclose you

TRAVELER
   These are my eyes.
   This is my neck.
   This is my body.
   Ordinary.

TRAVELER and DREAMER
   This. This. This.

TRAVELER
   This is my uniform.
   This is my mouth.
   These are my words.

DREAMER
   You are. You are. You are.

CHORUS
   Room 401, Corridor D

DIVER, TRAVELER, and DREAMER
   Now can you see me?
HOSPITAL PA
    Room 401, Corridor D

DOCTOR
    Cannot keep you.

TRAVELER
    That is the sea.
    Those are my boots.
    This is the morning.
    Ordinary.
    I am. I am. I am.

TRAVELER and DREAMER
    This is. This is. This is.

HOSPITAL PA
    Room 401, Corridor D

CHORUS
    Can’t contain you.

DREAMER
    When the water’s cold
    when the nights are long
    when my body’s dying
    will you sing a song

    Will you stay with me
    all through the night
    and hold me through the winter
    through the failing light

    Hold me.
    Hold me.

ALL
    Room 401, Corridor D
    Room 401, Corridor D
    Room 401, Corridor D

    The pulse flatlines.
ACT III, Scene III (Finale)

The DREAMER slowly walks over and picks up her tape recorder. She presses stop and the flatline stops. She sits on the side of the pool. She presses record.

DREAMER

The hospital review board maintains that nothing happened. That it’s impossible, that someone would have noticed if it were true. It feels like that game: two truths and a lie. You tell two stories that are true and one that is a lie. The goal of the game is to make the truths sound so impossible that the other person thinks they’re lies. Like this: Once, I met a man who teleported from the Philippines to Mexico. Once, I saw someone escape from a cell of water. Once, I woke up during surgery and no one knew.

How to decide what is false and what is true?

She holds her tape recorder out to record the pool: people talking and laughing, splashing, whistle blowing, feet running on the deck.

What I know is this:

This is my hand.
This is the pool.
This is my body.
This is what I hear.
This is what I see.
That is what happened.

I am alive.

I am awake.

She presses stop as the swimming instructor (the DIVER) enters.

DIVER

How are you?

DREAMER

Much better. Thank you.

DIVER

Have you been practicing your strokes?

DREAMER

Every day.
DIVER
    Shall we?

DREAMER
    Yes, please.

_The DREAMER puts on a pair of goggles, straps the tape recorder to her body and dives into the water. We hear the HUM. She emerges and starts swimming. Everyone else joins the DIVER on stage._

ALL
    Hold it all in your hands
    hold it at the back of your lungs
    hold it as you swim and try to get it right
    try to hold it long enough

    To speak loud enough
    to hold your weight
    to keep from sinking
    To say _This happened_
    _believe me, it’s true._

FIN
Hover

A Music Theatre Work in Three Acts

Music: T. Benton Roark
Text: Lindsay Cuff

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Duration: approximately 90 minutes

Roles:

The Dreamer – mezzo-soprano
The Traveler – baritone
The Diver – tenor
Chorus 1 – soprano
Chorus 2 – alto
Chorus 3 – tenor
Chorus 4 – bass

Instrumentation:

clarinet in B-flat; doubling bass clarinet
electric guitar; doubling classical guitar
percussion: vibraphone, glockenspiel, two suspended cymbals, high-hat, snare drum, two toms,
bass drum, tamtam, and triangle
viola; doubling violin (see note)
double bass

Premise:

_The word hoax is said to have come from the magic incantation “Hocus Pocus,” which is said to be a distortion of “Hoc est Corpus” (this is the body)._ 

What happens when our bodies do things that are not possible: great escapes from enclosed chambers, travel from one side of the world to the other in a minute, or wakefulness during surgery? What happens when we tell our stories and no one believes our experiences of truth or pain? There is sometimes a gap between what “is” and what we personally know to be true. I am here but I am not. I hover but I sink so far.

This is the story of a woman, the Dreamer, and her struggle to come to terms with a traumatic event that took place one year ago. The opera begins with a swimming lesson that dissolves into a flashback/memory of the traumatic event, a “waking” during surgery. Through recalling the events, the Dreamer meets two important men from two different centuries. These men, the Traveler and the Diver, have also experienced moments where their bodies have performed seemingly impossible feats.

The characters undergo a journey in which they must confront issues related to personal narrative. They face profound skepticism in the telling of their own stories and become paralyzed and suspended in a moment where neither emotional nor physical movement is possible. All three must find a way to cope in the face of this skepticism and slowly and intentionally begin to dismantle cultural myths and prove that their personal stories are true and hold weight.”

- Lindsay Cuff
Some Performance Notes for Hover (others indicated locally in score)

**Vocal:**
- This should be spoken freely, at the performer/director's discretion.
- This should be sung normally.
- These kinds of notes indicate falsetto, or a weak or naive tone depending on context.

**Guitar:**
- Soft tremolo with palm and base of thumb.
- Played normally with strings 5 muted.

**Percussion:**
- **non-pitched perc. key:** (unless on one-line staff, in which case instrument is specified)
- Triangle
- Small/crash suspended cymbal
- High-hat (with stick) closed
- High-hat (with stick) open
- Large suspended cymbal
- Small tom
- Snare
- Large tom
- Bass drum
- Tam-tam
- High-hat (foot) closed
- High-hat (foot) open

**Bb Clarinet/Bass Clarinet**
- Produce instrument's best "honk" sound
- Play closest possible multiphonic

**Viola/Double Bass**
- Indicates a half-stopped, "weak" tone; may sound slightly sharp
- Indicates mostly bow sound (i.e., little or no pitch, though pitches should be fingered in cases of quasi-niente dynamics)

**Harmonic notation all producing A4 (where "weak" tone is desired with white diamond notehead, it will be indicated**

**Guitar (Electrical and Classical)**
- Rolled slowly (if no roll indication is given, roll more quickly; "non-rolled" or "plucked" will be written where this is desired)
- Pluck or strum between nut and pegs
- Let ring

A note on tone and effects for the electric guitar:
The default electric tone should be a warm, vintage sound with only a little distortion and some reverb. Additional pedals that are required are a tap delay pedal, a compressor, and a phaser or Rototone pedal. An e-harp is also necessary for some passages, as is a capo.
hover
A music theatre work in three acts

score in c

music: T. Benton Roark
libretto: Lindsay Cuff

Act I
Scene 1

The DREAMER walks onto the stage. She is wearing a bathing suit and holding a field recorder. Ambient sound is heard from a swimming pool. People splashing and talking, whistles blowing.

Cues

Recording of soft, ambient pool sounds (People splashing and talking, whistles blowing); continue until fade is indicated

Dreamer

Slow \( \frac{9}{16} = 52 \)

Diver

Traveler

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Bb Clarinet
(doubling Bass Cl.)

Electric Guitar
(doubling Classical Gtr.)

Percussion

Viola
(doubling Violin)

Double Bass

1/4 tone flat until further notice

1/4 tone flat until further notice

108
She puts down her recorder and jumps into the water. A video image is projected of her underwater and all that is heard is the hum of being underwater. As she sinks to the bottom, she opens her mouth and bubbles stream out.

She flails her arms and comes splashing to the surface.

The video ends as she surfaces.
She pulls herself out of the water and sits on the stage and tries to catch her breath. She picks up the field recorder and records her breathing. She records the ambient sound of the room.

She speaks into the recorder.

Slightly quicker \( j = 60 \)
October, 2006.

I'm thirty-four.

I live alone.

I'm twenty-six.

I'm thirty-four.

I used to work,

but now I stay at home.

One year ago something happened,

something...
It started in this very pool. I collapsed in pain, was rushed to the hospital for a routine procedure. They do them everyday. The Hospital says nothing happened. The surgery went exactly as planned.
\textit{I went under I came up, but I know that's not true.}

\textit{Something happened if the in between when I was}

\textit{lying on the table. Something horrible}
Something broke between my mind and body. That left me dead inside. I can't sleep at night but I dream when I'm...
wake it's like I'm dreaming, and I dream only to

wake in other times other lives

moving ahead again

I don't know what's real anymore
I keep going back to that day that started in this pool. I came for a swimming lesson.

The swimming instructor (the DIVER) enters. MEMBERS of the CHORUS enter, also dressed in bathing suits. The DREAMER clicks off the tape recorder and puts it down.
Dmrr

Dvr

How are you this week?

Have you been practicing your strokes?

Bass Cl.

Gtr.

Vla.

D.B.

Not bad.

A little.

Well....

Shall we?
Faster $\frac{\text{add}}{\text{of}} = 84$

**two CHORUS MEMBERS dive into the water.**

**The DREAMER stays on the stage, watching.**

Gtr.

\text{Clap!  Blow lifeguard whistle}

Vla.

D.B.

\text{mf  sim. accents}

\text{pizz.  norm. (non accented)}
A bit more relaxed, and swung $\frac{7}{12}$

The stage becomes the meeting place of two worlds. The swimming pool and the hospital.
When your face is in the water and you don’t know how to breathe just try not to drown.

Don’t sink below

Don’t sink below

Ope’em eyes under water

Ope’em eyes under water

Inhale through mouth and nose ten times

Exhale through mouth and nose ten times

One one thousand and Two one thousand

One one thousand and Two one thousand

One one thousand and Two one thousand

One one thousand and Two one thousand
What to pack for your hospital stay

1. Pack a bag with your essentials. In addition to comfortable pajamas, pack comfortable clothing and shoes to wear home, toiletries and anything else you may need, such as a book or music.
Bass Cl.

D.B.

Vla.

Gtr.

But something happened.

Exhale through mouth and nose ten times.

Cause I'm so lonely and

Swung

One thousand two.

One thousand.

3/4

You go under

Enter

Exit shallow water

Exit and return.

You come up.

2. Be sure to leave your jewelry, credit cards, cash and any other valuables at home. The staff will not be able to protect your belongings while you are in surgery, and they will be vulnerable to theft or loss.
3. Don’t forget to take your insurance card, personal identification and a list of any medications you are currently taking with the dosage you are taking.
Something happened.

Dmr

Submerge  Hold breath

Open eyes underwater

Recover object from bottom with hands

One one thousand

Dvr

Dmr

150

V

V

V

Bass Cl.  Gtr.  Vla.  D.B.

Perc.

S

B

A

T

BvBass Cl.

Gtr.

Perc.

Vla.

D.B.

124
We hear the pulse from an electrocardiogram. She appears as if in pain, clutching her abdomen. She looks to the DIVER for help but he doesn’t seem to see her. She continues to double over in pain.
Scene 2

The chorus becomes the SURGICAL TEAM.
They are engaged in banal conversation.

Same tempo, straight 8ths

Gtr.:
- Soft tremolo with palm/base of thumb

Perc.:
- Let all ring with pedal

171

1/8 tone flat with whammy bar until "ord."

S

A

T

Gtr.

Perc.

Drmr

A

T

B

Gtr.

Perc.

Drummer

You're disgusting.

And you don't

know how to ha-

ve a good time, interrupted

The wife and I did that last year.
Nothing but non-stop booze,
tacos, and bikinis.

Nice. Where are you going!

13:56.

What time is it?

Last shift before I go on vacation.

Mexico. All inclusive.

You're disgusting.

And you don't

know how to ha-

ve a good time, interrupted

So? What's wrong?

feedback

ord.

127
An operating table is wheeled in and the DREAMER is placed on it. The surgical team hook the DREAMER up to electrodes and cords attached to the ceiling. The ANESTHESIOLOGIST puts a breathing mask over her face. The rest of the team continues to prepare the DREAMER for surgery.

It's your appendix. There's been a rupture.
Now count down from ten for me, sweetheart. Oh, where did you say you're going in Mexico?

She's not your sweetheart. Ok guys, cool it.

Now count down from ten for me, sweetheart. What's wrong with you? Why do you have to be like that?

—

Can you just stop opening your mouth? How do the Mexicans pronounce it? Poo-eeehrrrr-to Vah-yarrr-ta?

—

Ok seriously, that's enough. For the next few minutes no one speaks.

—
The TRAVELER comes from pool and onto the stage. He is wearing a military uniform. He looks out over the water, examines his hands, his feet, trying to figure out what has just happened to him.

The TRAVELER freezes. The surgical team walks away.

He walks around the operating table until the ANESTHESIOLOGIST notices him.

The TRAVELER freezes. The surgical team walks away from the operating table and the DREAMER. They are transformed into the TRIBUNAL of the INQUISITION.

\[ J = 69 \text{ piu mosso, Andante} \]

\[ \text{rit. a tempo} \]

\[ \text{rit. a tempo} \]

\[ \text{sim.} \]
Scene 3

**Sung in the style of Gregorian incipit**

Ap- proach the bench of the most

The most worthy the Truth, the only Tribunal of the Inquisition

Your suo-

**[Musical notation]**

S

S

A

T

B

BrBass Cl.

Gtr.

Perc.

Vla.

D.B.

**[Notational notations]**

rit.  a tempo

freely, recit.

solo dynamic

mf

pp

S

S

A

A

T

T

B

B

Gtr.

Perc.

Vla.

D.B.

mf

pp
prem-a-cy this man claims he does not know where he is

He says he was in Las Is-las Fi-li-

pi-nas yes-ter-day morn-ing Which you know which I know which God Knows can-not be For we are

now in Mex-i-co Cit-y the next ev-en-ing Oc-to-ber Twen-ty-fifth fif-teen nine-ty

three He's been brought be-fore us un-der charges of her-es-y Which

you know, which I know, which God knows must be. he claims that he is in-no-cent.

Ap-proach this most right-eous bench El Tri-bu-nal del San-to O-fi-ci-o de la In-qui-si-ción
a tempo, piu mosso

I've heard the evidence against you
There are Christians who saw you

lying in the centre

...of the Pla-za Ma-yor at-tired in a uni-form from a-cross the sea

...of the Pla-za Ma-yor at-tired in a uni-form from a-cross the sea

...of the Pla-za Ma-yor at-tired in a uni-form from a-cross the sea

...of the Pla-za Ma-yor at-tired in a uni-form from a-cross the sea
The TRIBUNAL shuffles around. They whisper to each other. They point at him. The TRAVELER walks over to the DREAMER. She sits up and listens to him. He is confused and desperate and begins to plead his case.

subito ritenuto

meno (q = 66)
with sleep still in my eyes
Go to work each day
make sure my

boots are shined
I kiss my wife on the neck before I leave I tell you

for certain I'm an ordinary man
I'm an ordinary man

with slow OH (Leslies) effect
with volume ped.
arco

make sure my

rit.
poco più mosso

{music notation image}

Only Tribunal of the Inquisition

We've heard the evidence and, no ped.
You proclaim you are not from this place, you state you don't know how it happened you in-sist you traveled across the sea, in-santly in the time a cock takes to:

Bass Cl.

Gtr.

Vla.

D.B.
crow
Approach the bench this is not possible

crow
Approach the bench this is not possible

crow
Approach the bench this is not possible

With no boat you cannot

Where are you from?
To speak these

Who

What have you done where are you from?
Who sent you to

trav el

Where are you from?
Who

to speak these

Where are you from?
Flowing (\( \dot{J} = 69 \))

**Gtr.**

**Perc.**

**Vla.**

**D.B.**

---

**Trvlr**

Rain falls in my col-

---

**Trvlr**

lar with sleep still in my eyes I jump o-ver each

---

**Trvlr**

pizz., sustain all as long as possible
Trvrl
pud-dle My boots don’t lose their shine Stand guard at the

BoBass Cl.

Gtr.

Perc.

Vla.

D.B.

Trvrl
pal-ace my col-lar wet a-against my neck

BoBass Cl.

Gtr.

Perc.

Vla.

D.B.

molto rit. a tempo, meno

Trvrl
You must be-lieve it, I’m an or-di-nar-y man

BoBass Cl.

Gtr.

Perc.

Vla.

D.B.
Quicker (\(j = 76\))

Approach this most righteous bench El Tribu nal del San to O-

fici o de la Inqui si cion en Mexi co We have been cho sen by God

By Bass Cl.

Perc.

Vla.

D.B.

S

A

T

B

BV/Bass Cl.

Gtr.

Perc.

Vla.

D.B.

S

A

T

B

BV/Bass Cl.

Gtr.

Perc.

Vla.

D.B.
I get into bed. With sleep still in my eyes. See my wife’s

Each drop of sweat shines. Her hands anchor.
I'm an ordinary man

Who sent you to speak these words? Who whis-pered them in your ear? Trav-eler of so man-y lies!

Who sent you to speak these words? Who whis-pered them in your ear? Trav-eler of so man-y lies!

Who sent you to speak these words? Who whis-pered them in your ear? Trav-eler of so man-y lies!

Who sent you to speak these words? Who whis-pered them in your ear? Trav-eler of so man-y lies!
The TRAVELER turns and faces the TRIBUNAL, addressing them directly.

Last night in a coun-try called the Phi-lip-pines
I stood guard at the pal-ace.
This mor-morning I ar-rived in a place
far from home, you say it’s Mex-i-co.

You must be-lieve me
I am not who you say I am
I’m an or-di-nar-y man.
The TRAVELER is bound and dragged to the side of the stage. The TRIBUNAL exit. The DREAMER gets up. The TRAVELER yells to her.

You must be contained.

The DREAMER doesn't hear the TRAVELER. Instead, She walks over to the edge of the pool where a dream-like water ballet is taking place.

I'm telling the truth!

Put him in the cell. LOCK HIM AWAY!

The TRAVELER is bound and dragged to the side of the stage. The TRIBUNAL exit. The DREAMER gets up. The TRAVELER yells to her.
\textbf{Bass Cl.} \quad \textbf{Gtr.} \quad \textbf{Perc.} \quad \textbf{Vla.} \quad \textbf{D.B.}

\begin{align*}
\text{\textit{meno} } \textit{\textbf{\(J = 54\)}}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{\textit{\textbf{\(J = 58\)}, flowing}}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{\textit{\textbf{\(a tempo\)}}}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{\textit{\textbf{\(\text{Bb Clar. expr.}\)}}}
\end{align*}
Scene 4

freely, approx. previous $\frac{3}{4} = \frac{144}{432} \text{ Allegro}

The DIVER appears from behind the water cell. He is dressed as a showman.

Allegro $\frac{144}{432}$

Swung

1. Bass Cl.
2. Gtr.
3. Perc.
4. Vla.
5. D.B.

\(437\)

\(433\)

\(429\)

\(417\)
Ladies and Gentlemen, Ladies and Gentlemen, Boys and Girls, Boys and Girls. What you are about to see is me.

strong arms strong legs perfect movement rejection of fear rejection of pain

If you do not truly see, you will not see...

soft, intense, and exaggeratedly carnivalesque (nasally) p

mag - ic mag - ic mag - ic

re - quires i - ron nerve,
The DIVER confidently raises his arms, signaling applause. The SWIMMERS and DREAMER cheer. The DIVER ceremoniously readies himself for the feat, stripping down into a bathing suit. The CHORUS enters and walks over to the tank, adding more water.
If you do not truly see, you will not see...

What you’re about to see contains no trickery.

If you do not truly see, you will not see...

He dramatically drops his hands to his side, signaling an end to the applause.

He dramatically drops his hands to his side, signaling an end to the applause.

Two CHORUS MEMBERS lock his feet into a harness that is attached to a rope suspended from the ceiling.

Two CHORUS MEMBERS lock his feet into a harness that is attached to a rope suspended from the ceiling.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Boys and Girls
What you’re about to see contains no trickery.
If you do not truly see, you will not see...
No magical way to escape

No secret trick I've trained my lungs to hold breath for as long as I need
I've taught my body to move in

ways thought impossible
But they are possible because I
do them every night

decrease pace of trem to standstill
"He lies down on the stage with his feet in the air."

The rope is pulled and the DIVER is dragged upwards by his feet.

Tonight I'm in pain, my right ankle is sore. Maybe tonight will be the time. The time I don't come out.
When people realize, it's always been me. Nothing supernatural, just a man. Just me.

poco piu mosso

Everything fades to silence as the SWIMMERS and the DREAMER cheer in silence and slow motion
Just me, just a man, just a routine just an ordinary human

Breathe in Breathe out Breathe slow Just me, just a man, just a man
Spotlight on Traveler, alone in chains at the far end of the stage

Dvr

con-cen-trate
Feel each muscle each
li-ny
vein
un-til they

Trvlr

Breathe out

S

Breathe out

A

Breathe out

T

Breathe out

B

Breathe out

BvBass Cl.

subito p

Gtr.

Perc.

Vla.

D.B.
En-ter the chains. En-ter the pain. Emp-ty my mind. Emp-ty it all.

En-ter the chains. En-ter the pain. Emp-ty my mind. Emp-ty it all.

En-ter the chains. En-ter the pain. Emp-ty my mind. Emp-ty it all.

En-ter the chains. En-ter the pain. Emp-ty my mind. Emp-ty it all.

En-ter the chains. En-ter the pain. Emp-ty my mind. Emp-ty it all.

En-ter the chains. En-ter the pain. Emp-ty my mind. Emp-ty it all.
The DIVER is plunged into the cell. The theatre goes black except for a light that shines on the SURGICAL TEAM gathered around the operating table and the DREAMER standing by the water tank. The DIVER’S heartbeat pulses.
Heartbeat fades out as EKG sound fades in simultaneously.

The Divers heartbeat turns into the EKG machine, getting faster and louder.

The DREAMER begins banging on the water tank.

Don’t! Don’t go under!

Stop! Don’t! Don’t go under!

Stop.

END ACT I
Act II

Scene 1

The TRAVELER is pulled out of the water cell. He is gasping for breath. The TRIBUNAL pushes him onto his knees, places a silk scarf in his mouth and ties it around his head. The DREAMER is where she was before, staring at the water tank.

Very slow $\frac{d}{= 46}$

Bass Cl.

Gtr.

Perc.

Vla.

D.B.

Bass Cl.

Gtr.

Perc.

Vla.

D.B.
They slowly pour water down his throat.
The Tribunal rings out the scarf, scarcely listening to him.

Please! Please... I am not who you think I am.

I don't know what I've done
I've no idea how I

Mmm...

The scarf is removed from the TRAVELLER's mouth. The TRAVELLER spatters and spits water, leaning forward to catch his breath. He sways his head around in circles, clearly confused.

Please! Please... I am not who you think I am.
579

Trvlr

got here
Maybe something happened in my sleep...
but no... no it's not possible

B

Mmm...
1/4 tone flat with bar

Gtr.

colla guitarra

Perc.

Vla.

D.B.

dim. al niente

a tempo

581

Trvlr

Please please every thing I've told you before is

S

Mmm

Ah

A

Mmm

Ah

T

Mmm

Ah

B

Ah

Biv/Bass Cl.

Gtr.

Perc.

Vla.

D.B.

sord., delicately

sord., delicately

sord., delicately

2 string trem (I and II)

sord.

sord.

171
The scarf is placed back in the TRAVELER's mouth.

The cycle of pouring begins again.

Please! with end of "please"

muffled by scarf

true I beg you please

S

accl. accents ad lib.

BvBass Cl.

brush softly with flesh of finger fade out over bar

finger pitches, create feedback or volume swell

Gtr.

sticls

Perc.

pressure/scratch

Vla.

pressure/scratch

D.B.

pp

Broadly \( \frac{4}{5} \) The cycle of pouring begins again.

S

accl. accents ad lib.

A

accl. accents ad lib.

T

accl. accents ad lib.

B

persuasive action (i.e. slamming empty pitcher down on table) *optional, director's choice

BvBass Cl.

Gtr.

Perc.

quasi bow sound only

Vla.

sul III

D.B.
Spotlight on the DIVER behind a scrim, dripping wet, standing on top of the “Chinese Water Torture Cell” and raising his hands in triumph. He is facing away from the audience towards an “imaginary” audience, situating the house “backstage”. Applause is heard offstage (from DREAMER and SWIMMERS).

The DIVER swings down on a rope. He does not see the DREAMER.

He walks to his “dressing room”, enters and shuts the door behind him. The DREAMER follows but keeps her distance.

The CHORUS stop torturing the TRAVELER, suddenly interested in the DIVER.
loud whispers

Ask him how he did it
How is it possible? How did you do it?

Bassist Cl.

Gtr.

Perc.

Vla.

D.B.

Ask him!

You ask him!

You ask him!

(pspoken on given rhythm)

We want to know how

How is it possible? How did you do it?

D.B.

Gtr.

Perc.

Vla.

D.B.

174
A bit slower \( \frac{j}{63} \), swung

A bit slower \( \frac{j}{63} \), swung

Special powers would have you believe in their ability to channel the

Spec-ial po-wers would have you be-lieve in their a-bili-ty to chan-nel the su-per

special powers would have you believe in their ability to channel the super

Well you got ta be care-free those in each town who pro-less to pos-sess

careful, there're those in each town who possess to possess

This section should sound sound loose, swung;

Quick downstroke on beat 2s, soft, half-muted upstroke;

Embellishments on chords at the performer's discretion

swung, ad lib. in

Swung, ad lib. in the style if desired

Don't wish you be-lieve in their a-ble-ty to chan-nel the su-per

don't wish you believe in their ability to channel the super
The only thing that's real is the living human body.
A MEMBER of the CHORUS (TENOR) is selected by the others and thrust forward.

poco accel.  

He swaggers up to the DIVER and punches him in the gut.

Everything is still while everyone waits to see if the DIVER is harmed.

There is a collective exhale as the DIVER stands up talk.

Everyone applauds.
with a tempo

Dvr

Bass Cl.

Perc.

Vla.

D.B.

Show me what you got
Show the strength of my body
my arms, my legs and my gut
A punch to connect

poco rit.

a tempo

\( \text{\( j = 54 \) (a tempo)} \)

emphatically, each note short and accented
(trying to prove something but overcompensating)

step right up

quick, staccato

punctuated strums

\( \text{sim.} \)

\( \text{pizz. alla Bartok} \)

\( \text{arco} \)
A different MEMBER of the CHORUS is threat forward. He walks over to the DIVER and, after a moment’s hesitation, punches him in the gut. There is a pause—the DIVER takes longer to recover this time. The next passage happens during this pause.
You see I have been around. Tried to speak with the dead
My mother, my father, my friends. What I know is this:

Look around. Feel your pulse. The rise and fall. This is all there is.

He stands up.

poco accel. \[ \text{He stands up.} \]
The CHORUS applauds.}

...and then, bored, they go back to torturing the TRAVELER. 

The DIVER lets down his guard. He is tired and slumped over.
The pouring stops and the scarf is again removed from the TRAVELER’S mouth. The TRAVELER falls on his face and crawls toward the edge of the stage, desperate. He is quivering and crying. The TRIBUNAL laughs.
Adagio ($\frac{3}{4} = 60$)

Recit. unmetered ($\frac{3}{4}$ = approx. $\frac{3}{4}$ of preceding)

a tempo

Soy mal-vad-o? Un dis-pi-lo de Sa-tan Are my hands, the

hands that bathe my daugh-ter serv-ants of the Dev-il
Cue entrances loosely in time with voice

Has she been harmed? Have I harmed her without knowing? What have I done?

piu mosso

Slightly quicker

Con-tes-te-me
Answer me God
Con-tes-te-me
Have you abandoned me
How did this happen?

The TRAVELER sees the DREAMER and goes over to her.

The DREAMER turns her attention from the DIVER and speaks to the TRAVELER for the first time.

You shouldn't be here
Try to escape I'll be here to help you

cuando despierta estará alla

Try more emphatically

Don't let them do this to you.

more emphatically
molti rit.  Slower \( \frac{d}{d} = 44 \)  a tempo

So bring me down  Down to the ground

I'm so very tired  Tired of the in between  In between

rallentando    Even slower (\( \frac{d}{d} = 88 \))

life  in between  Connect me to life or con...

192
Showing signs of injury, but with bravado all the same. Sung to himself, or to no one in particular; he is in another world. mp

A member of the CHORUS begins to walk toward the DIVER. The DIVER does not notice him and sings very slowly. poco meno mosso \( \frac{d}{4} = 80 \)

1. A member of the CHORUS begins to walk toward the DIVER. The DIVER does not notice him and sings very slowly.
will throw a punch to connect a punch to take me out

The DREAMER realizes that the man is about to punch the DIVER and tries to warn him. He doesn't hear her and sings to himself.

So step right up

Show me what you got
The DIVER turns his head at the DREAMER’S warning and
notices the man near him on stage. He addresses him directly.

The CHORUS also sees the DREAMER and goes to her.
There is a struggle as they take hold of her, drag her over
to the operating table and pin her down.

The man punches the DIVER.

The man punches the DIVER.
Scene 2

A bit quicker \( (q = 72) \)

The DIVER falls on the floor, the DREAMER goes limp and the surgical team begins surgery. The viewpoint of the DREAMER is seen via video (i.e. heads bent over her, operating). The dialogue is fragmented.

Cardiogram beep starts, out of time with rest (somewhere between the half and quarter)

Cardiogram beep starts, out of time with rest

(somewhere between the half and quarter)

Dampen r.h. line (dead stroking fine if easier)

Plain, boring sound - non vib.
Hint of scratch

Sul III, IV

Or similar, controlled multiphonic, avoid honk

Bass Cl.

Gtr.

Perc.

Vla.

D.B.

Bass Cl.

Gtr.

Perc.

Vla.

D.B.

Sustain with as much as possible (with soft feedback or gently shaking the neck)

With pick
Quicker (\( \dot{J} = 80 \))

The nurse hands the doctor the knife.

The surgical team does not hear the dreamer.

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Can you just stop opening your mouth?

Cool it.

Alright I'm going in

with a strumming feel, let strings ring more

poco più mosso $\frac{1}{2} = 42$

The DOCTOR brings the knife closer and closer to her abdomen.

No what are you doing? I'm awake.

I can hear you

What's wrong with you?

Why do you have to be like that?

Why do you have to be like that?
The DOCTOR makes the incision and continues the operation. Blood starts to spread on her hospital gown. The stage is completely dark except for the spot on the DREAMER and the video projection. The video of the DREAMER's POV looking up at the surgical team keeps playing as if the surgery is going on normally.
Why do you have to be like that?

I'm burning!

Your hands are red!

What's wrong with you?
Shall we have a drink after work?

I'm burning!
Dreamer begins to rise towards the ceiling.

stringendo poco a poco
The DIVER and the TRAVELER carry her to the edge of the pool. The DIVER and the TRAVELER hang from the ceiling by her feet as if executed. The surgical team exit.

The DREAMER's hands are released from the cords holding them. The DREAMER hangs from the ceiling by her feet as if executed. The surgical team exit.

The DIVER and the TRAVELER enter. The DIVER pulls her down and releases her feet. The DIVER and the TRAVELER carry her to the edge of the pool. The DIVER and the TRAVELER bathe the DREAMER with the pool water. They wash off the blood.
Duerme te mi ni - na
Duerme te sol li - ta que
cuan - do des - pier - tes
es - ta - rá al - la

sord., sostenuto

They comfort her. They stroke her hair.

I hear you.

airy, sustained, sporadic swells

Mm... humming, molto legato

Duerme...
Something's wrong!

slightly flat - make pitch unstable with bar

sord., suss., sul 1, port., with little sporadic
swells almost like a radio coming in and
out of tune

slightly flat, slowly going about a half-tone flatter, then "recover" to original pitch; do this about once every couple of bars

We can

We can

see you

see you

Bass Cl.

I know some thing's wrong

I know some thing's wrong
The contrast in the POV video projection of the surgery increases until all that can be seen is the surgical light. The surgical light becomes a light at the surface of the water. The video is still the DREAMER’s POV but this time she is under water. The light gets bigger and bigger as she moves up towards the light, towards the surface. Towards the bottom of a boat.

The contrast in the POV video projection of the surgery increases until all that can be seen is the surgical light.
The surgical light becomes a light at the surface of the water. The video is still the DREAMER’s POV but this time she is under water. The light gets bigger and bigger as she moves up towards the light, towards the surface. Towards the bottom of a boat.
Broadly $d = 40$  The video ends as the TRAVELER and the DIVER place the DREAMER onto a boat/raft in the water.
Repeat quietly to self as if concentrating on an exercise, tempo approx. and slightly quicker than the beat.
**Act III**

**Scene 1**

_Dreamer's Voice Through Field Recorder_

I am 34 years old. I live alone. I used to work, but now I stay at home. A year ago something happened, something I can't explain, something I cannot prove, something that no one will believe but I know it's true. It started in this very pool.

(pp) Repeat quietly to self as if concentrating on an exercise, tempo approx. and slightly quicker than the beat.

Act III

Scene 1

"Eyes Ears Nose Mouth"

tempo & mature previous tempo independently

pp

kill all volume immediately

_Bass Cl._

Gtr.

Perc.

Vla.

D.B.
The Swimmers start a slow water ballet

Picking up a bit $\frac{4}{4} = 63$

When the water's cold when the nights are long

Drop D clean, warm sound


Vibr.


Vibrato a piacere


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In all strokes there comes a point where your hand stops moving forward and starts pulling back past your body and against the water. This stage of the stroke is known as the catch and it's at this point that getting a good hold of the water is most crucial.
In an ideal world you would be able to anchor your hand stationary in the water, so that as you exert a force your hand doesn't move relative to the poolside, but instead stays still as your body moves past this point.

Of course, this being the real world, it's not as easy as it sounds.

When the water's cold, when the night's are long.

Will you stay with me, when my body's dying in? Will you sing a song?
me all through the night and hold me through the winter through the failing

all through the night and hold me through the winter through the failing

Oh

Oh

Oh

Oh

Oh

It can seem easier just to let the water go, particularly at the end of a stroke, but you need to make as much out of each movement as you can.
Hold it as you swim and try to get it right

Hold it as you swim and try to get it right

Hold it as you swim and try to get it right

Hold it as you swim and try to get it right

Hold it as you swim and try to get it right

Hold it as you swim and try to get it right

Hold it as you swim and try to get it right

Hold it as you swim and try to get it right

Hold it as you swim and try to get it right

Hold it as you swim and try to get it right
Try to hold it long e-nough

Try to hold it long e-nough

Try to hold it long e-nough

Try to hold it long e-nough

Try to hold it long e-nough

Try to hold it long e-nough

Try to hold it long e-nough

Try to hold it long e-nough

Try to hold it long e-nough

Try to hold it long e-nough

Try to hold it long e-nough

Try to hold it long e-nough

Try to hold it long e-nough

Try to hold it long e-nough

Try to hold it long e-nough

Try to hold it long e-nough
The chorus members and swimmers get out of the pool. The DIVER walks towards the operating table and lies down, the TRAVELER goes back behind the water cell.
Scene 2

The TRIBUNAL enters, whispering and talking among themselves.

Some one's ar-ri-ved a boat has ar-ri-ved from the Philip-pines

whispered

some one's ar-ri-ved from the Philip-pines

abc
c

change smoothly from "s" to "sh"

change smoothly from "s" to "sh"

slow down and get louder

slow down and get louder

Free recit. (approx. \( \frac{3}{4} \) 72)

Your ex-cell-en-cy

Most ho-ly

Oh right - eous head

Free recit. (approx. \( \frac{3}{4} \) 48)
Have you heard?

What is it?

A boat?

A boat has arrived

A man has arrived on the

That is all?

still Drop D, not rolled
The DREAMER steps off the raft onto the stage.

boat from the Phil \- pipes

He heard talk

of the prisoner

Claims he knows who he is
The TRAVELER is brought out from behind the water cell.
He looks at the DREAMER, confused.

The TRIBUNAL begin loudly whispering and talking amongst themselves.

I know this man
I know this man

But tell me...
Picking up a bit $\frac{1}{4} = 63$

When did you last see this heretic?

Before we set sail from Maniila, Philippines is the last time I saw him.

How he came to be here, I am sure I do not know, but I tell you.
Dmr

for certain I know from where he comes he is not a heretic

Bass Cl.

Drmr

Perc.

Vla.

D.B.

Gtr.

B= Bass Cl.

Pedal throughout passage

slightly detached

He is only ordinary an ordinary man

Trvlr

I am ordinary an ordinary man

B= Bass Cl.

Gtr.

Perc.

Vla.

D.B.
The TRIBUNAL fades, scurrying to the back of the stage.

The DOCTOR enters and sits down beside the DIVER.

I am sorry.

Well marked
For what?

I'm sorry

Every one has a final fight especially me

Even you!

I'd rather be someone else, someone like you

But you're the great magician

There was nothing you could do.

I know it's not enough

I'd rather be someone else, someone like you

There was nothing you could do.

I know it's not enough
But everyone loves you.

Don't you see?

There's nothing!

But see what I do just...
freely, parlando, in the same style as previous show act, but weaker

"I'm the greatest performer of all time but I'm a man who has cheated death too long too long"

sober, straight

Broadly \( j = 54 \)
day is not defeat but victory I shall finally be released.

molto rit. a tempo, poco più mosso rallentando

As long as I can.

Will you stay with me!

Glock.

soft-med. mallet

p bien détaché

As long as I can.

As long as I can.
The sound of a pulse through a hospital machine is heard.

The TRAVELER and DREAMER are on a separate part of the stage.

Largamente $\frac{4}{4} = \frac{4}{4} = 50$

Cardiogram pulse begins, regular,
out of time with ensemble,
and continues throughout passage

softly pulsing

$p$

D.B.

Drnr

Dvr

Trvlr

HOSPITAL PA

Room 401, Corridor D

I am here

I am here

I am here

I am here
I am nowhere

Room four o one corridor

Can not hold you

fading away

Room four o one corridor

D

B

Gtr.

D.B.
When the water's cold when the nights are
cold

These are my eyes This is my neck

Drmr

Ddv

Trvlr

Gtr.

B=Bass Cl.

Gtr.

Perc.

D.B.

Glock.

keep it light
Drmr

Dvr

This is

Trvlr

This is my body

Bass Cl.

Gtr.

Perc.

D.B.

ordinary

ordinary

long will you sing a song?

This is my body

ordinary

ordinary
Will you stay with me all through the
You are

This is my uniform
This is my

When the water's cold
And the night's are

Room four o' one
Corridor D

Room four o' one
Corridor D

Will you stay with me all through the
You are

This is my uniform
This is my

When the water's cold
And the night's are

Room four o' one
Corridor D

Room four o' one
Corridor D
You are just through the night and hold me through the winter through the failing night just

Those are your words through the failing night just

You are just through the winter through the failing

Those are your words through the failing night just

Those are your words through the failing night just
Now you see me
Now can you see me!
Now you see me
Those are my boots
This
This
This
This
This
This
This
This Can not keep you
This Can not keep you
HOSPITAL PA
Room 401, Corridor D

Cue
Drmr
Now
Now you see me
Dvr
mf
Now can you see me!
Trvlr
Now you see me
Those are my boots
D
This
A
This
T
This
D
This
B
This
This
B/Bass Cl.

Gtr.
Perc.
Vla.
D.B.
This is I am

Ordinary This is I am

Ordinary This is I am

This can't contain This can't contain

This can't contain This can't contain

This can't contain This can't contain

This can't contain This can't contain
in tempo, but freely with Dreamer

P freely, quietly, as a broken lullaby

Will you stay with me all through the

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The DREAMER slowly walks over and picks up her tape recorder.

The pulse flatlines

Faster, but with repose $q = 60$

All exit one by one except DREAMER

The DREAMER slowly walks over and picks up her tape recorder.
She sits on the side of the pool.
Scene 3

She presses record. We hear pool sounds: people talking and laughing, splashing, whistle blowing, feet running on the deck.

Andante $\frac{4}{4} = 92$

Cue

Perc.

Vla.

Soft pool sounds

soft cluster drone

pedal down throughout

strum alla guitarra, bow markings are for strum direction, not bow

$p$ Humming Diver tune from beginning softly and seldomly; swung, out of time with ensemble, a bit slower than tempo

$pp$

A

B Viv Bass Cl.

Drmr

The hospital review board maintains that nothing happened. That's impossible, that someone would have noticed if it were true.

It feels like that game: two truths and a lie.
You tell two stories that are true and one that is a lie. The goal of the game is to make the truths sound so impossible that the other person thinks they're lies.

Like this: Once, I met a man who teleported from the Philippines to Mexico.

Once, I saw someone lowered upside down into a tank of water.

Once, I woke up during surgery and no one knew.
How does someone decide what is false and what is true?

What I know is this:

This is my hand. This is the pool. This is my body.

This is what I hear. This is what I see. That is what happened.

I am alive. I am awake.
She presses stop as the swimming instructor (the DIVER) enters.

out of time with ensemble $\frac{4}{4}$ = 88 approx.

Much better. Thank you.

How are you? Have you been practicing your strokes?
The DREAMER puts on a pair of goggles and straps the tape recorder to her body.

rallentando \[ \dot{\dot{\dot{\dot{\dot{\dot{\dot{\dot{\dot{\dot{d}}}}}}}}}} = 60 \]

out of time with ensemble \( \dot{\dot{\dot{\dot{\dot{d}}}}} = 88 \) approx.
She dives into the water. We hear the HUM. She emerges and starts swimming. Everyone else joins the DIVER on stage.

Broadly ($d = 50$)
Hold it at the back of your lungs

Hold it at the back of your lungs

Hold it at the back of your lungs

Hold it at the back of your lungs

Hold it at the back of your lungs

Hold it at the back of your lungs

Hold it at the back of your lungs

pochissimo piu mosso
Hold it as you swim and try to get it right

Volkensmiede
a tempo

hushed and reverently

To speak loud enough To hold your weight To keep from

light, crisp sound (sticks)
sinking To say this happened believe me it's true.
Fade guitar and cue with lights

1263

Cue

Dmr

Dvr

Trvlr

S

A

T

B

Bass Cl.

Gtr.

Perc.

Vla.

D.B.

a tempo $\frac{j}{j} = 50$

Fade pool sounds

tremolo with thumb/palm, mostly muting, quasi niente
dim.
fade to niente

Fade guitar and cue with lights

END

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