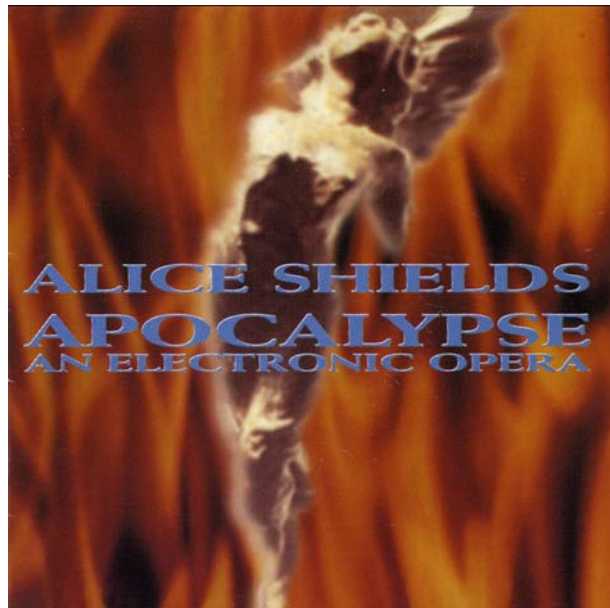


NWCR647

Alice Shields

Apocalypse: An Electronic Opera



1. Sacrifice	(9:58)
2. The Sea	(3:51)
3. First Greeting	(19:16)
4. Here	(1:18)
5. Truth	(3:12)
6. On The Dark Mountain	(3:35)
7. Final Question: Aeon	(5:20)
8. Dismemberment and Eating	(2:45)
9. Someone, I Say, Will Remember Us	(1:52)
10. Someone Spoke of Your Death	(3:44)
11. Apocalypse Song	(2:51) -
12. Heat Drum	(2:26)
13. Organ Screaming	(6:25)
14. The Dawn Wind	(1:11)

Performers: The Woman, The Seaweed, and
Chorus: Alice Shields; Shiva: Michael Willson;
Electric Guitar: Jim Matus; Keyboards and
Synthesizers: Alice Shields

Total playing time: 67:58

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Notes

Apocalypse is an electronic opera for live and recorded singers, choreographed with movement patterns from the Hindu Bharata Natyam dance-drama. The present recording contains selections from the complete opera, and is essentially the tape part of *Apocalypse*, created with MIDI and analog electronic music technology. In live performance, the soloists and chorus sing along with their already-recorded electronically-manipulated voices on tape. All of the voices you will hear on this disc are my own—sometimes heavily manipulated, the only exceptions being Scene 46 "Aeon" and Scene 60 "Organ Screaming," in which the role of Shiva is sung by the baritone Michael Willson; and Scene 50 "Eating," which is rendered by myself and Jim Matus, Jim being a gifted belcher who can perform upon command. Jim also soloed in this scene on broccoli; I accompanied him with yogurt. The various "bird" and "sea-lion" sounds are also my own voice; I'm sure my operatic voice teachers would be proud.

The central character in *Apocalypse* is "The Woman," who journeys from conception, to birth, to her meeting with and initiation by the Goddess, whom I've called "The Seaweed." The Seaweed is a sort of biological Aphrodite who emerges from the ocean covered in green sea-slime and algae. She communicates with the Woman through phrases based on the Bhagavad Gita. But instead of Krishna's emphasis in the Gita on duty and emotional detachment, the Seaweed teaches empathy, emotional attachment, and reverence for all life.

After taking on herself the persona of the Goddess, the Woman prepares for her meeting with the God, whom I have termed Shiva. Shiva appears as both the ascetic god covered in white ash, the inhabitant of graveyards, as well as the erotic god covered in flowers, the riotous companion of a forest-full

of women. In *Apocalypse*, Shiva teaches identification with all life, the breaking of the illusion of separateness, through the vivid metaphor of sexuality. The opera culminates in the Woman's ritualized union with Shiva in the form of a stylized enactment of the Tantrik *maithuna*, the love-making of Shiva and Shakti, of spirit and matter, mind and energy, asceticism and sensuality.

In *Apocalypse* I use certain aspects of South Indian musical techniques, such as the rhythmic *tala* system, which I manipulate in "Heat Drum" in ways outside the traditional uses of the tal.

I hope the following biographical vignettes give a feeling for how I came to write *Apocalypse*.

The beginnings of *Apocalypse*

The actual writing of *Apocalypse* began in the summer of 1990. Outraged and depressed by the ignorant and bigoted Puritanism reemerging in the United States, in June I went to visit my friend Daria Semegen in Stony Brook, NY. As I sat with Daria on her patio in the summer night, I began improvising derisive verse. She chimed in, and we threw phrases back and forth to each other—peals of our raucous laughter mixed with the dark, heavy-laden shadows of the trees, and would momentarily interrupt the croaking of the crickets and tree-frogs. The candles around us, too, would flicker with our laughter in the summer night, and then resume their motionless, quiet burning.

On returning to Manhattan, I used this first text to compose "Apocalypse Song." And then I began to create the entire drama around this piece.

Multicultural Influences

My multilingual, choreographed electronic operas stem from

several sources, including the Bharata Natyam dance-drama of India and the ancient Greek theater. I have studied Bharata Natyam with the prominent Indian dancer Swati Bhise in New York, and have performed with her company. In 1992 I played the role of the demon-king Ravana (a "pants" type role familiar to me as an operatic mezzo-soprano), in a Bharata Natyam version of the Ramayana. This was the Deepavali Festival, the Hindu Festival of Lights in New York City, and I, a Westerner in front of an audience of several thousand Indians, found myself performing the traditional Indian dance-drama movements with an exaggerated clarity which could only come from my Western operatic training. As King Ravana, I saw myself performing sustained "asides" to the audience to cue them in to my character's nefarious intentions, asides which in a slightly different form are native to any number of witches and sneaky villainous types I have sung in Western operas.

For various Bharata Natyam dances, I have been notating the rhythm of each moving part of the body, resulting in a rhythmic movement score for each traditional dance and dance-drama I have learned. I have carried my fascination with this elegant and enormously dramatic Indian art-form into *Apocalypse*, adapting the Bharata Natyam movements for performance by the Western opera singer.

Apprenticing myself to ancient Greek artists has proved more formidable, due to the obstacles facing one who wishes to study with the dead. In lieu of more direct tutelage, I have studied, as did Isadora Duncan and others, the bodily movements frozen in the ancient statues and vase-paintings of Greek women dancing in the throws of the Dionysiac ecstasy. In *Apocalypse*, I have used such Bacchic dance-movements as well as the *cheironomia*, the movement patterns of the ancient Greek theater.

Electronic music

As one of the first female composers of electronic music, in 1965 I became technical instructor at the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center, and Vladimir Ussachevsky's personal technician, collaborating with him on many pieces. I received my doctorate in music composition from Columbia University in 1975 and, then became associate director of the Columbia-Princeton Center, remaining in this position until 1982. One of my first works was electronic music for Sam Shepard's radio plays *Icarus* and *4H Club*, in 1966. These were directed by Shepard and featured Joseph Chaikin and other luminous actors. *Icarus* especially endeared itself to me because of a hilarious belching scene, in which I had to electronically modify the actors' far-sounding eruptions. I realize with amusement that this belching scene in 1966 inspired me years later to create its sequel in *Apocalypse*. But frankly the connection didn't dawn on me until I wrote these notes.

One of my first theatrical scores was electronic music for John Houseman's 1967 production of *Macbeth* at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival. John Duffy wrote the instrumental score, and I created electronic sound for the witches' scenes, which were pre-recorded. On the day of judgment of my work, the great man arrived at the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center, preceded by a bevy of young men who brought in a most imposing long-legged film director's chair, emblazoned with the name "John Houseman." They placed it in the posture and position of a throne. And then, he arrived, and sat in the throne, a person of great dignity and concentrated gaze. An aura of worship swirled around the impressive white-haired man on his tall chair. Then a hush: Houseman was ready to give his intense concentration to the

Barn Owl and Frog sounds that he had been told I had electronically manipulated and mixed with his witches' voices. All eyes were glued on Houseman and myself, as if there were a spotlight upon us two. I was twenty-four years old, unnaturally shy and intensely studious, and I pressed "start" on the tape recorder. The production ran for two seasons.

In 1967 I composed with Ussachevsky, Otto Luening and Pril Smiley the first feature-length electronic score for television, *Incredible Voyage*, commissioned by CBS-TV and sonorously narrated by Walter Cronkite. This television documentary concerned the filmed inner workings of the human body, and Pril and I wrote a great deal of the music; she and I still occasionally discuss which one of us composed the Bladder and which the Stomach; she's sure that she did the Eye.

Opera Composer

In 1966, at the age of twenty-three, I became the first opera-composer apprentice in the United States, a position created by the dynamic singer-impresario David Lloyd, director of the Lake George Opera Festival. Robert Ward's opera *The Crucible* was being performed that year at Lake George, and I assisted Ussachevsky in writing electronic music on tape for the live performance. We used my own voice as the sound source for the tape part, and I seem to have been doing this ever since, as in the present recording of *Apocalypse*, where highly modified versions of my voice play every character except Shiva. At the Lake George Opera in 1966, 1968, and 1970, Lloyd provided orchestral readings of the operas I was then writing, culminating in what amounted to a full performance of my opera *Odyssey II* in 1970, supported by a Presser Foundation grant. This performance was remembered by members of the company for many years, because of the rock-hard Wheatena which had solidified on the stage floor after having been flung around by the singers during the performance. The Wheatena had proved stubborn, resistant, and difficult to remove.

Opera Singer

As mezzo-soprano, I've performed roles from Monteverdi and Cavalli to Wagner and Amram, with major opera companies including the New York City Opera and the Opera Society of Washington, D.C. With the latter I sang Rosswisse in Wagner's *Die Walküre* in 1973 at the Kennedy Center, with Antal Dorati conducting and George London directing. As I flew onstage for the *Ride of the Valkyries*, fully armored and wielding a spear, I was blasted with, surrounded and immersed in glorious walls of sound, Wagnerian brass, massive richness, and ear-splitting excitement. Though I had heard this piece many times before as a listener, though I had studied its form and its orchestral score, now as I sang it for the first time on stage, my body became one with the sounds of the brass. I could not tell my own voice from the harmonic uproar of the orchestra: I was a brass instrument, and the orchestra was singing with my voice. We became one, this piece and I, and it yet reverberates through me.

Multilingual Influences

Concerning the multilingual nature of my works, I can say that this stems directly from my father's influence. My father, Archibald Shields, was head of the Foreign Language Department at Holt, Reinhart & Winston, publishing college textbooks. He himself had a doctorate in Spanish literature, having written his thesis on the *Zarzuela*, (the native Spanish opera). He also read poetry and literature in a variety of languages. He had studied in Spain before the Spanish Civil War, where he learned to sing Flamenco songs, accompany-

ing himself on the guitar. These songs he would sing to us in a rich and powerful baritone, and they were the most exciting and mournful songs that my child-self had ever heard. From my earliest life, I watched him as he constructed stories and dialogues for his textbooks in various European languages. And then, when the tape recorder became a viable audio device in the 1950s, he became one of the first to create tapes to accompany language study. So in my middle childhood, I would often be walking home, and from a distance of several houses away would hear the by-then-familiar sound of Russian being played backwards on the Ampex tape recorder, my father being in the midst of editing the tapes of his Russian speakers' lip-pops. He found this most easily accomplished, and most safely, by reversing the direction of the tape. Thus Russian and other languages, spoken backwards, often floated through my parents' and the neighbors' gardens. By early adulthood, this device of reversing the direction of a tape of spoken or sung language became one of my favorite electronic music techniques: there's some of it in the first scene of *Apocalypse*, called "Sacrifice."

Long a poet as well as a composer, I write *Apocalypse* not only in English, but also use classical Greek, Gaelic, and bits of Sanskrit. I take fragments of the Greek from ancient authors such as Sappho, Archilochos, and Aeschylus—a phrase here, an adjective there—and combine them crudely together, creating ruins of language analogous to the ruins of temples. I use Sanskrit mantras, and Gaelic; the latter as the language of the Seaweed. I chose Gaelic for the Seaweed, for it is rich in the natural images of the Goddess: images of the sea, light, and earth.

—Alice Shields

Alice Shields has composed nine operas and music-dramas, including the orchestral opera *Odyssey III* (1975); the electronic opera *Shaman* (1987); the chamber opera *Wraecca* (1989); and the electronic opera *Mass for the Dead* (1992), which will be premiered by the American Chamber Opera Company in NYC in Fall, 1993.

Shields has received grants for her operatic, vocal and electronic work from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York Foundation for the Arts, the Mary Flagler Cary Trust for Music, CAPS, the National Opera Institute, the Martha Baird Rockefeller Foundation, and the Presser Foundation. Shields's *The Transformation of Ani* is available on the CRI American Masters disc *Pioneers of Electronic Music* (CRI 611).

Michael Willson, baritone, performs a wide range of opera, music-theater and concert works. He has received critical acclaim as Schaunard in Puccini's *La Bohème* with the New York City Opera at Lincoln Center; as well as in Richard Foreman and Stanley Silverman's *Love and Science*, with the Music /Theatre Group; Peter Maxwell Davies's *Eight Songs for a Mad King* with the Boston Musica Viva; and Davies's *The Lighthouse* with the Opera Festival of New Jersey. His album of songs by John Philip Sousa is available on Premier Recordings.

Jim Matus, along with being a producer and sound engineer, is songwriter and guitarist for the alternative rock band Mr. Right and the metal/jazz band Paranoise. He has also played electric guitar in groups such as Giant Metal Insects and the Peter Borno Quintet. Matus's own music combines the raw energy of heavy metal and the improvisatory freedom of jazz, with the dissonant pungency of twentieth-century harmony. Matus is recorded on Island/Antilles, Soundbox, and Ozone Records.

Apocalypse

By Alice Shields

Characters:

The Woman: A soul, journeying.

The Seaweed: The Sea-Goddess, covered in green algae and sea-slime, biological Aphrodite.

Shiva: Shiva, as the erotic god adorned with flowers, and the ascetic god smeared with white ash, inhabitant of graveyards. *Also called Dionysos.*

Chorus: (and Attendants) Sometimes an austere Greek chorus, sometimes wild revelers in a forest, sometimes a bloodthirsty mob.

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE: SACRIFICE

Out of the darkness, the Woman strides towards the audience in rhythm to the music: Attendants swarm around her, shining flashlights on her. The Woman stops abruptly, lifts an object high in the air, and plunges a knife into it, screaming. She hurls the bloody object out into the audience. Then she moves fast into the audience, halts in front of someone, and calls out to them:

(*in English*)

WOMAN: Do you want the Mark?

She marks the person's cheek, while chanting in classical Greek

WOMAN: Farewell, star of the night, farewell

Lit by the circling flashlights, she strides back to center stage.

SCENE TWO: THE LAND OF THE DEAD

With only her eyes visible in the darkness, the Woman speaks, moving her eyes in particular patterns: (*in English*)

WOMAN:

Weed-strung path, inner solitude.

Four days into the land of the dead,
are only rabbit tracks on a hill,
by day, by day.

There in the shade, tall weeds sweat
soil-smell, dark water.

Black snakes slip in from the shore,
swirling their imprints outwards from the moist bank,
bursting in the sunlight immortal as steam,
fiery gases of exploding stars.

All dying, but undead,

all new, all old,

all lasting, unlasting,

one into the other writhing in the grasp of time,

at each second dying, and undying.

—I breathe the icy breath of stones,

sucking the drumming artery of a horse's neck;
I hear about me the bright winds' swirl,
exaltation in my lungs' blood."

She turns her head left, and freezes.

SCENE THREE: CONCEPTION

The Attendants inch their lights slowly forward in front of the Woman's feet. She follows, edging her feet cautiously into the light.

SCENE FOUR: THE DARK PLAIN

Thunder and lightning. The Attendants make their lights jump from spot to spot on the floor.

The Woman anxiously leaps into each new spot of light. The Chorus sits in meditation upstage. They cry out to the Woman:

(in Greek)

CHORUS:

Obey fate: strike lightning, welling bird-scream,
lashed by the sea, hatred.
The night has no mind, on a night like this, is eyeless.
Through the void the wind whirls,
although there is no wind, no mind, eyeless.
The rain dissolves my brains,
its eye-teeth bleed black through my nose.
I have no memory on this night, am mindless.

Sinking through the storm-soil,
I am unborn.

SCENE FIVE: PUSH

All movement stops. The air is dense with grey fog. The Woman pauses, unable to see in front of her. Soon the fog parts, revealing an empty doorway: The Woman moves to the door, and pauses in front of it. *(in English)*

WOMAN:

(Push.)
I push, gently, on the door:
opening, slightly, it opens out.
(Press.)
Pressing my face hard into the crack,
I am seeing, dim,
the deepening fog.
(Hold up, a small light.)
Hold out, holding up a small light,
I see:
Its dim glow will not penetrate the deepening fog.
(The door has shut. Stand.)
The door dosed behind,
I stand still, surrounded, in the fog.
She steps through the open doorway.

ACT TWO

SCENE SIX. THE SEA

The fog clears. Sea-waves are heard, and the cries of sea-birds. Sitting downstage, the Woman dips her fingers into a bowl of water. She raises her hand, and lets the drops fall gently back into the bowl. She speaks to the water in her hand.

(in English)

WOMAN:

Someone spoke of your death,
and it moved me to tears,
and I remembered how often
we put the moon to sleep
as we were talking."

A small, bright light appears upstage, shining at the audience.

WOMAN:

You, my friend, lie somewhere,
long, long ago gone to dust

The light begins to grow in size, and move downstage.

WOMAN: I will call you back from exile.

The Chorus echo the Woman's words in Greek, shining lights on their own faces from beneath:

(in English and Greek)

WOMAN and CHORUS:

To give up the ghost once again;
to shout forth, to mourn for
that which is seen, the form;
to destroy in the name of the gods
insolence against the body."

SCENE SEVEN: APPROACH

The bright light moves downstage in time to the music. The Woman watches.

SCENE EIGHT: FIRST GREETING

The light, now brightly glaring, arrives downstage. Out of the light steps the Seaweed, covered in green slime. Her long black hair drips with water and sea-refuse. The Woman rises to greet her. The Chorus circle them with flashlights as they call out to each other:

(in Gaelic)

WOMAN: Is it you? Is it you?

SEAWEED: It's me, it's me: black, cold, wet, tired.

WOMAN: Is it you? Is it you?

SEAWEED: It's me, it's me: the water swift sea swimming

WOMAN: Was it you? Was it you?

SEAWEED: It was me, it was me: Tonight the sun shining in the evening home.

SCENE NINE: DIALOGUE 1

The Seaweed and the Woman sit down to talk. The sea-waves are heard. *(in English)*

WOMAN:

Tell me, Mother of the Sea,
what are the signs
of one whose consciousness is immanent?

SEAWEED:

I say,
that when you fully know what you desire,
what you hunger for,
when you fully crave and reverence all that is;
when you fully know what death takes from you;
then, then, I say,
that you live on this pungent earth
in immanence,
in purity and passion.

Scene 9 repeats.

SCENE TEN: SEA DANCE 1

The Attendants bring a pail of sea-water and dump it over the Seaweed's head. Refreshed, she wrings out the water and sea-refuse from her hair. She then rises up to dance her answer to the Woman. *(in Gaelic)*

SEAWEED:

Breaking wave of the light,
Spark of fire too high,
downward, downward moving;
Shining wings of the world,
combing her hair.
Ancient music, wind of the tree,
eye of the needle, green maiden, green pool,
breath of foliage, the eyes of a stream.

SCENE ELEVEN: SECOND GREETING

The Woman rises. She and the Seaweed repeat their greetings to each other in Gaelic. (Repetition of Scene 8)

SCENE TWELVE: DIALOGUE 2

They sit calmly again. The sea-waves are heard. (*in English*)

WOMAN: Mother of Earth, Sea-Born, tell me, tell me more.

SEAWEED:

Sweet body, sweet little mind,
I love thee, and I will tell thee more.
And this is,
that while in-taking objects throughout the senses,
a person develops attachment for them;
and from such attachment, empathy arises,
and from empathy, god-like love.
Therefore, my sweet fresh bud,
one whose senses are empathic with their objects;
is of high intelligence.
What is night for all beings,
is dawn for those with empathy;
and dawn for all beings,
is night for the in-seeing eye.
This is what I say."

Scene 12 repeats.

SCENE THIRTEEN: SEA DANCE 2

The Attendants dump water over the Seaweed's head. Refreshed, she rises and dances, singing: (*in Gaelic*)

SEAWEED:

Drink thou garden, garden drink thou,
will see your food writing;
lifted, lifted, a song at the window,
a song that will drink, that will drink the corn,
a song that will drink the corn on the hill.

SCENE FOURTEEN: THIRD GREETING

The Woman rises: She and the Seaweed repeat their greetings to each other in Gaelic (*Repetition of Scene 8*)

SCENE FIFTEEN: DIALOGUE 3

They sit again. The sea-waves are heard.

(*in English*)

WOMAN:

Holy Mother,
Sea-born Mother of mountains and earth,
the way you have described is frightening;
it is lonely, oh White one, Wailing One,
Mother of the Dark Sea.

SEAWEED:

For one whose soul is bridled,
full feeling is frightening.
But she whose emotions are practiced,
and who strives by appropriate trials,
is assured of glory.
This is what I say.

Scene 15 repeats.

SCENE SIXTEEN: SEA DANCE 3

The Attendants dump water over the Seaweed's head. Refreshed, she rises and dances, singing: (*in Gaelic*)

SEAWEED:

Dangerous sounds, dangerous singing,
deep, long eye.
Time, sky, firmament, flood,
dark cloud, dark knowledge, horror.
In the morning, open road.
Question, that will be advice;
Answer, that will be hunger.

SCENE SEVENTEEN: LOOKING

The Seaweed meditates: a flame appears in her right hand; ice appears in her left. She slowly raises her hands to join them over her head, looking from one hand to the other.

SCENE EIGHTEEN: THE CORPSE

As her hands join over her head, the fire and ice meet. Voices cry out on the tape. The Seaweed tilts her head back: a projection is shone upon her so that her body seems to be that of a corpse. The Woman and Chorus turn away in anguish.

SCENE NINETEEN: HERE

(*in English*)

SEAWEED:

Here. These are summer apples, full of birds,
bird-full dry grass.
Then they fall down small hard green apples on the ground.
This is, they are unfulfilled thoughts,
actions hardly begun, and yet which anyway
will sow seed.
I insist that you choose.
But if you pick wrongly, there is no recourse,
because I only understand one.
Hurry. I can't brook delay, I can't brook delay.

(*in English*)

WOMAN:

Then what do you want, Grandmother? *the genitals?*
Do you want *the entire hips?*

SEAWEED:

That's light, my Grandchild! My Grandchild can kill game!
(Scene Twenty Omitted)

The Seaweed bursts into the form of a radiant flower, joyously singing.

SCENE TWENTY-ONE: TRUTH

The Seaweed pours a shining flask of light into the mouth of the Woman. The Woman cries out in ecstasy. She and the Seaweed circle around each other in bliss.

ACT THREE (OMITTED)

Shiva and the flower-covered worshippers approach: The Seaweed sees them, and blesses the Woman, adorning her in seaweed she takes from her own body. The Seaweed disappears as Shiva bursts through

a scrim, carrying flashing strobe lights. The Chorus rush to him, singing in Sanskrit "Reverence to Shiva!"

ACT FOUR

SCENE THIRTY-NINE: ON THE DARK MOUNTAIN

Thunder and lightning. The Chorus cry out to Shiva: (*in Greek and Sanskrit*)

CHORUS:

Obey paradox:

raving bird of darkness,
reveal fate.
Guardian of the surf-beaten shore, purifier,
Ravisher who rides in the clouds,
Reveal fate.

SCENE FORTY: DIALOGUE 1

The Woman questions Shiva:

(in English)

WOMAN:

Where do you come from? Where do you come from?

SHIVA:

I? I have come out of the ring of fire, I have returned to free you.

WOMAN: Where do you come from? Where do you come from?

SHIVA:

I? I have come out of the ring of fire,
I have returned to give you joy.

SCENE FORTY-ONE: FIRST NAMING

The Woman and Shiva call out to each other, the Chorus joining them: (in Greek)

WOMAN: Rain-loving Dionysos, wailing beast of the night!

SHIVA: Hail, Queen, white-armed goddess.

WOMAN: Rain-loving Dionysos, wailing beast of the night!

SHIVA: Hail, Sea, swift freedom.

SCENE FORTY-TWO: DIALOGUE 2

The Woman questions Shiva:

(in English)

WOMAN: What do you say? What do you say?

SHIVA:

Five-fold is the sacrifice of the senses,
five-fold the sacrificial body,
and five seasons are there in the year of life.
Pleasure obey,
for a single path leads to the house of death."

SCENE FORTY-THREE SECOND NAMING

The Woman and Shiva call out to each other in Greek, the Chorus joining them. (Repetition of Scene 41)

SCENE FORTY-FOUR: DIALOGUE 3

The Woman questions Shiva:

(in English)

WOMAN: What should we do? What should we do?

SHIVA:

Arouse sweet earth, naked freedom.
Reverence the rich field.
Thrice trial, twice tyranny:
Pleasure obey,
for a single path leads to the house of death."

WOMAN: And how will this be accomplished? And how will this be accomplished?

SHIVA:

When your mind leaves the dense forest-of delusion,
you will find empathy,
and be touched by all that you have heard, and all that you will hear.
Then will you gaze on him who drinks the dark sea's bane,
then will you feel delight and sorrow,
bliss, ecstasy, and pain.

SCENE FORTY-FIVE: THIRD NAMING

The Woman and Shiva call out to each other in Greek, the Chorus joining them. (Repetition of Scene 41)

SCENE FORTY-SIX: FINAL QUESTION: AEON

The Woman questions Shiva:

(in English)

WOMAN: Who are you? Who are you?

SHIVA

I, the bright, I waft in the bright.
In the form of the day, in the rays of the sun,
The Bright One, leader of the Bright One,

Soma, the leader of Soma!

I am both Mother and Father, and I copulate with myself,
with myself, and with those who love me.

I am the Aeon to come, I am the womb that gives birth
to the light shining in splendor.

I alone am the Way,

and I am calling you into the sacred light

Come to me, and I will bear your pain.

(Scenes Forty-Seven and Forty-Eight- Omitted)

The Chorus hang Shiva upside down, where he soliloquizes

SCENE FORTY-NINE: THE GREAT MOTHER'S REVENGE

The Chorus stealthily approach Shiva to kill him:

(in Greek)

CHORUS:

Hail, holy Artemis, Mother of the Gods,

Great Mother Leokothuay, blue Queen of the Ocean,
Olympian Rhea, blessed Eileithuia, holy Artemis, hail.

SCENE FIFTY: DISMEMBERMENT AND EATING

The Chorus jump on top of Shiva as he hangs upside down, and ride astride him, shrieking. They perform a dance in which they seem to slice off his genitals and rip his body apart. They ravenously eat gobs of his flesh. Flinging the bloody bones about, they collapse, sated. Lying outspread on the floor, they giggle and belch, kicking each other with their feet. Eventually, heavy with their big meal, they lie in exhausted silence.

(Scene Fifty-One Omitted)

The Chorus eventually become anxious about what they've done. They feel about the stage for parts of the God's body. Finding parts of his phallus, they put it together again. The newly-assembled phallus is two feet high, with balls the size of grapefruit. They carry the phallus lovingly to a pedestal, and place it thereon. They then pray to it to come alive again. They stroke it, try to lift its balls, and kiss it, trying to turn it on. They move it from side to side as if it were walking. Then they step back and watch expectantly for it to come alive. But it doesn't move. Eventually, they crawl sadly away to the sides of the stage.

SCENE FIFTY-TWO: SOMEONE, I SAY, WILL REMEMBER US

Depressed, the Chorus lower their heads in contemplation. The tape speaks their thoughts: (in English and Greek)

TAPE: Someone, I say, will remember us in the future.

(Scenes Fifty-Three and Fifty-Four Omitted)

The Woman whispers an invocation to the God. Soft music is heard. Clouds begin flowing across the top of the stage, luminous and gently radiant, sunset-colored. Soft fog gradually fills the stage. Finally, the fog parts, revealing the God, who sits in silent meditation. His bare chest and face are smeared with white ash; his long hair matted like a yogi's. In silence; the luminous clouds drift off and disappear.

SCENE FIFTY-FIVE: SOMEONE SPOKE OF YOUR DEATH

Light dims. The Woman sits calmly watching the departing clouds. The cries of strange birds are heard. The God tries to speak. He painfully wrenches open his mouth and lips in huge, slow movements, but no sound issues forth; there is only the cry of the birds. The Woman sifts sand into her left hand. She speaks to the sand and the Chorus echo her words.

(in English)

WOMAN:

Someone spoke of your death,
and it moved me to tears,
and I remembered how often
we put the moon to sleep as we were talking.
You, my friend, lie somewhere,
long, long ago gone to dust
—I will call you back from exile.

The Chorus echo the Woman's words in Greek, shining lights on their own faces from beneath:

(in English and Greek)

WOMAN and CHORUS:

To give up the ghost once again;
to shout forth, to mourn for
that which is seen, the form;
to destroy in the name of the gods
insolence against the body.

SCENE FIFTY-SIX: REACTIONS

Seeing Shiva, the Woman turns away in excitement, saying to herself:
(in English)

WOMAN:

I have no mother, and no father.
Born into the world of grief and grueling pain,
I have no mother, and no father.

The Chorus cry out to her, encouraging her to move towards Shiva:

(in Greek and English)

CHORUS:

Rear, eat ancient seed;
Call the Beast, harsh home!

(Scene Fifty-Seven- Omitted)

The Chorus rush to the Woman and clothe her in jewels and flowers.

SCENE FIFTY-EIGHT: APOCALYPSE SONG

Adorned in flowers and jewels, the Woman turns to sing a song of seduction to the God. The Chorus rush over and clothe Shiva in jewels and flowers. The Woman dances, as she sings across the stage to him. *(in English)*

WOMAN:

Your hot lips, Apocalypse,
Your words divine made flesh in mine,
Turn my blood back into wine.

SCENE FIFTY-NINE: HEAT DRUM

The Chorus rush to take the phallus off its pedestal. They run to the God, and strap it onto him. All stage lights go off, as the Chorus light torches. Half the Chorus hold their torches to illuminate the Woman, who lies on a couch stage left opening and dosing her thighs in time to the music. The rest of the Chorus hold their torches on Shiva, illuminating his strapped-on phallus.

Shiva moves in ritual step across the stage to the Woman. The Woman opens and doses her thighs faster and faster.

SCENE SIXTY: ORGAN SCREAMING

Shiva arrives in front of the Woman, his phallus almost touching her. The CHORUS dash about the couple, moving their smoking torches so that the couple's wildly shifting shadows drastically change size against the stage walls. Shiva and the Woman enact *maithuna*, the

sacred intercourse of form and energy, of Shiva and Shakti, the Great Goddess, whom the Woman has now become. They enact three choreographed, ritualized orgasms, one at the end of each verse of the music.

(in Greek)

SHIVA and WOMAN:

In the name of the gods, call the beast divinity!
In the name of the god's, to destroy insolence against the 'body!
In the name of the gods, here the immortal Gorgon!

WOMAN: Eating fire!

SHIVA: Eating fire!

Fire flashes between their bodies as they separate.

SHIVA and WOMAN:

Lie down, leader, life, Light!
Marry the noble naked Night.
Oh holy, ancient Dragon,

WOMAN: Sacred Bull! Sacred Bull!

Fire flashes between their bodies as they separate.

SHIVA and WOMAN:

Holy, sweet, naked lover,
Wholly wild, wild wind,
Divine bliss, divine bliss!
Hail! Hail! Hail!

Blue-white lightning spikes them as they embrace the final time. They are swallowed up in clouds of blue-black light. Shiva, the Woman and the Chorus vanish in the weltering chaos of light and dark.

SCENE SIXTY-ONE: EPILOGUE: THE DAWN WIND

The flashing chaos of light and sound fades into darkness.

The night sky is seen, over the dark silhouettes of gently rolling hills. It is just before dawn, and crickets and whippoorwills are heard in the summer night. A faint glow begins on the horizon.

(in English)

TAPE VOICE:

Here to this place,
here where we are,
the most beautiful light of lights has come.
They have gone, our relatives
who earlier saw the radiant dawn;
and they are coming,
who shall see her in the future.
Stir yourselves,
for the life-giving breath is upon us,
the Dawn Wind!

A sweet, grass-scented wind blows gently through the audience, as all light fades.

END

Production Notes

Producer: Alice Shields.

Executive Producer: Carolyn Sachs.

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