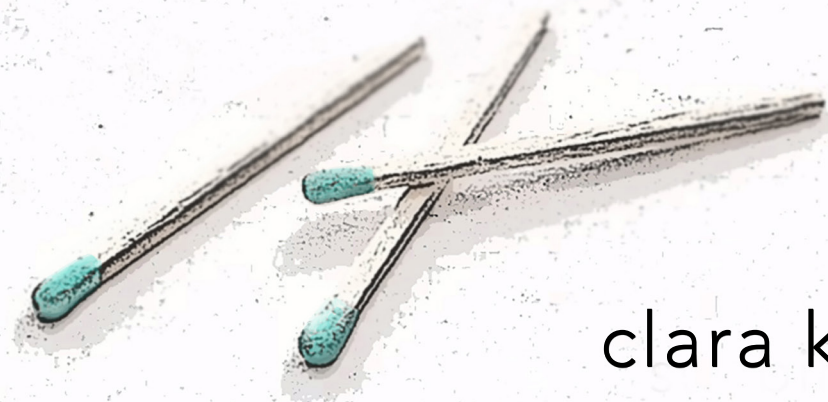


our little matches



clara kim

Tracks + performers

1. **eldorado** [2:57]
[electronic]
2. **letters to a screen** [7:15]
Adriana Valdés, soprano
Thomas Piercy, clarinet
3. **extinguishing dance** [9:40]
[electronic]
4. **reliquary** [8:15]
Alexander Yakub, violin
Laura Manko Sahin, viola
Molly Aronson, cello
Clara Kim, piano
5. **how warm a little match would be** [7:39]
[electronic]
6. **stations (palimpsest)** [7:47]
SoYoung Choi, violin
Alexander Yakub, violin
Laura Manko Sahin, viola
Molly Aronson, cello
7. **albumleaves** [10:46]
Clara Kim, piano

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Track Notes



Photo by Clara Kim

1. *eldorado*, electroacoustic (2023), is named after the iconic nightclub that had been the center of queer and trans life in 1920s Berlin. In the months leading up to the rise of Nazism, the club at Motzstraße 15 was shuttered in an anti-LGBTQ police crackdown. Shortly afterwards, the Nazis converted it into the SA headquarters. Today, the site is occupied by an organic grocery chain. This piece is a mirror into the present era, amidst resurgent fascism and the persecution of queer people, from the perspective of the thoughts of a trans woman. Her fearful monologues are heard amidst the rapidly escalating political danger to her and her trans siblings, represented by a sample of Nono's *Il canto sospeso*.

2. *letters to a screen*, for clarinet, voice, and fixed electronics (2020), was written for the Fire 1000 Poems collective, as part of a happening centered around political prisoners. It quotes excerpts from letters between Ulrike Meinhof and Gudrun Ensslin during their imprisonment in Stammheim prison. The members of the Red Army Faction, along with other political prisoners, exchanged handwritten letters in order to disrupt the physical and political isolation forced by the state. While handwritten letters each bear the mark of its writer in pen, modern communication often relies on increasingly frictionless platforms, distancing in both the physical and mental sense. Today's correspondences with prisoners are often (if allowed at all) mediated through sterile, for-profit platforms that not only undermine human contact by design, but gather data and extract profits from loved ones trying to reach them in the name of "security". Human beings are social creatures, and even in such an alienated existence, they need social bonds just as they need food and water. A starving person will even eat rotten food to survive.

To represent this forced alienation, the piece layers, collages, convolutes, and alters three "levels" of communication as translated to music: real performance (live musicians), semblance of a performance (recordings, of both composed and quoted music), and artificial imitation of a performance (MIDI simulacra). Reality is stifled and artificiality dominates as the treacly neo-romantic sounds of Strauss' *Metamorphosen* resurface, representing the quiet fascism entrenched into the workings of both West Germany in the 1970's and the United States in the 2020's. The theatrics of the piece depicts the desire, and indeed need, to relay the message after all, so the real performers—the real message again and again creeps to the surface, but struggles to break out under the second- and third-hand layers.



Gudrun Ensslin



Ulrike Meinhof

"Raging aggression, for which there is no outlet... That's the worst. The clear awareness that you don't have a hope of surviving; the utter failure to communicate that; visits leave no trace. Half an hour later you can only mechanically reconstruct whether the visit took place today or last week —"

— Ulrike Meinhof,
Letter from a Prisoner in the Isolation Wing
[of Stammheim prison,] 1972-73

3. *extinguishing dance*, electroacoustic (2022), is a piece that I wrote early in my transition. It is about the social death of a trans woman.

The dance itself is only apparent at the ending, a sample of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* (another allusion to quietly normalised fascism, now explicitly marking trans people as a target), but the entire piece is about the death-dance of social disposal. At the climax of *Rite of Spring*, a girl must dance to death so that the spring may continue to come. So occurs the ritual burial of trans and gender nonconforming people, collectively

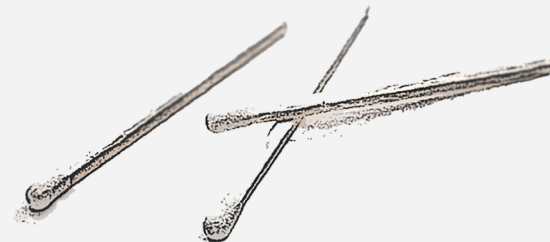
"chosen" to be sacrificed. The trans woman must dance, so that those participating, looking on, filming on their phones, and profiting from views of their "content" may be assured that their comfortable social hierarchy and cisnormative, patriarchal gender norms remain undisturbed.

Have you ever guarded anything so vigilantly as you protect yourself against the shame of gender-wrong?

— Isabel Fall, "Helicopter Story"

4. *reliquary for piano quartet* (2019)

was commissioned by PHACE Ensemble. It fragments and collages an array of pieces in the "classical canon," a moniker that ascribes an almost religious reverence to the music of the 18th- and 19th-century Western European aristocracy, as "canonized" by imperialist violence and "revered" by bourgeois cultural institutions as an image of hegemonic power. In that sense, the title refers to the relic not only as a purportedly holy object, but as an anachronistic remnant of the past, kept for its association with the romanticised notion of the "great masters." Thus viewed, these relics lose their quality of "artness" and become mere objects serving soft power, eventually repeating themselves like a broken record. At the end, the piece disintegrates into sparse noises before the musicians ultimately walk off the stage, the music itself having been exhausted.



5. *how warm a little match would be*, electroacoustic (2023), refers to a sentence from Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Match Girl*. The piece is an image of an impoverished girl freezing in the streets during the New Year, lighting her matches one by one to keep warm and seeing visions of the shelter and comfort she lacks.

When the composer Helmut Lachenmann wrote his uncompromising opera based on the fairy tale, he had in mind the "social violence of innocent bourgeois indifference to suffering" that caused the girl to die of exposure. When I revisited a recording of this work during my transition, it took on a personal dimension. Trans people today face that social violence, now empowered by the state, in a form neither innocent nor indifferent. Andersen's "happy ending" was that the girl goes up to heaven to meet her grandmother; but religious families of trans children drive them out of home into the cold streets, while fascist movements work to drive others like them into a life of fear and repression — denied medical care, criminalized, placed in wrong gendered prisons to be brutalized with legal sanction.

When the girl first lights the match, she sees a vision of Lulu's brief moment of freedom and the queer revolution of Julius Eastman's *Gay Guerilla*. When she lights the second match, she has only her name to hold onto. She quietly keeps lighting one match after another in order to feel the warmth of that little flame.

"She wanted to warm herself," the people said.
"No one imagined what beautiful things she had seen..."

— Hans Christian Andersen, *The Little Match Girl*

6. *stations (palimpsest)* for string quartet (2021) was commissioned by Quartet121. A palimpsest is a parchment manuscript whose original ink was scraped off so the sheet could be reused for a new document, a common practice to conserve costly parchment before the development of book printing. *stations (palimpsest)* is similarly made of overwritten material: originally a semi-complete sketch for a collage-based work for string quartet, now partially replaced by a transcription of a slowed-down field recording of Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York City. The remnants of the collage material, quotations from Sibelius' *Voces Intimae* and Beethoven's String Quartet no. 13 among others, peek in weakly through the sounds, sometimes being blurred and convoluted as if two radios in the bus terminal were competing for frequency dominance. Classical music such as Beethoven's Cavatina has been played in Port Authority and other stations as a socially coded form of hostile architecture. Hidden under the charming music, ostensibly meant to calm busy commuters, is the real purpose of marking the place as "elite" and thus unwelcome to the homeless, as part of the gradually tightening enclosure of public spaces. The music thus becomes "overwritten" by the reality of the social situation in which it is heard.

7. *albumleaves for solo piano* (2021) was written in the memory of Mary Ann Blunk. It is based on (fragments, collages, and convolutes) passages from ten pieces from a collection of old piano scores that she owned. These are interspersed with reworked fragments from *Elegy*, an early piece of mine that was also dedicated to the memory of her husband; and spectral chords derived from recordings of the Miller Bell Tower at Chautauqua, New York. The title of the piece refers to the album leaf, a miniature composition (usually for solo piano) originally written as a private dedication to be inserted into a personal album. The plural is a collection of such pieces, as would be found in her piano books.

Performers



Clara (Sunbin) Kim Composer, piano

Clara Kim is a Korean-born composer based in New York. Clara Kim's compositions have been performed in concerts and festivals such as the Aspen Summer Music Festival and School, the Zodiac Music Festival (France), BUTI Tanglewood Summer Music Festival, the Uzmah/Upbeat International Summer Music Festival (Croatia), and the High Score Summer Music Festival (Italy). An accomplished pianist, Clara performed her own Fantasy-Concerto with the American Symphony Orchestra under Leon Botstein. She has been commissioned by the New Juilliard Chamber Ensemble, Quartet Indigo, Iktus Percussion Ensemble, Smash Ensemble, and the Da Capo Chamber Players. She has received numerous awards including the American Academy of Arts and Letters Charles Ives Scholarship (2018) the Gina Rapp String Quartet Competition (Juilliard 2017) the New Juilliard Chamber Ensemble Competition (2017) seven ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Awards and the North/ South Consonance Award and commission. Clara completed her Masters degree in Music Composition at The Juilliard School of Music and her DMA degree at Manhattan School of Music, where she studied composition with Reiko Fütting.

Molly Aronson Violoncello

With a diverse career as a cellist and educator, Molly Aronson is a musician known for her “solidity and verve” (*San Francisco Classical Voice*). She has performed across the US and abroad in settings as varied as Carnegie Hall and Madison Square Garden to state prisons. Highlight performances include those in Embassy Series, Bargemusic, Savannah Philharmonic Chamber Music Series, Luzerne Festival Series, Candlelight Concerts with the Highline Quartet, and Mohawk Trails Concerts. She has performed as guest principal cello with the Mid-Atlantic Symphony, Glen Falls Symphony, and Brooklyn Chamber Orchestra. Molly frequently performs music by contemporary composers and has worked with the American Composer’s Alliance to record new chamber pieces. Molly has also performed with popular artists including the Eagles, Josh Groban, Rod Stewart, and Michael Bublé, and toured and recorded with the Paragon Ragtime Orchestra.

SoYoung Choi Violin

Violinist SoYoung Choi is an active performer in both the United States and Korea. She has appeared as a soloist with major Korean orchestras such as the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, Bucheon Philharmonic Orchestra, and Daejeon Philharmonic Orchestra. A passionate chamber musician, her festival appearances include Yellow Barn, Kneisel Hall, Taos School of Music, and Heifetz Music Festival.



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Thomas Piercy Clarinet

Thomas Piercy, based in NYC and Tokyo, has performed clarinet and hichiriki throughout the Americas, Europe, and Asia. “Brilliant... playing with refinement and flair...” (*New York Times*), he has played in the Emmy Award-winning *Juno Baby* and *Blue Eye Samurai*; performed with pianist Earl Wild and Frederica von Stade; worked with Leonard Bernstein; appeared in a KRS-ONE rap music video; recording with members of Maroon 5 and other pop groups; and performed on Broadway and Off-Broadway, television, radio, and commercial recordings. Piercy’s repertoire ranges from music from the Classical period to premieres of over 300 compositions by composers of all ages, walks of life, and experience, from emerging young student composers to the the most outstanding names in new music, including Ned Rorem, Jennifer Higdon, Sir Richard Rodney Bennett, Fernando Otero, and Shoichi Yabuta.

Laura Manko Sahin Viola

Violist Laura Manko Sahin has performed as a soloist, chamber musician, and orchestral player throughout the United States, Europe, and the Middle East. She was the Principal Violist of the Cape Cod Symphony Orchestra, violist of the Boston Harp Trio, and a member of the Bilkent (Ankara, Turkey), Knoxville, and Winston-Salem-Symphony Orchestras. Dr. Sahin is on the faculty at Skidmore College and the New Jersey Youth Symphony Orchestra. She is a founding member of the Hubbard Quartet, and substitutes with the Phantom of the Opera Orchestra and the Philadelphia Orchestra.



Sound engineering assistant, Oktaven Audio, October 26, 2022

Adriana Valdés Soprano

Cuban-American soprano Adriana Valdés, born in La Habana, Cuba and based in New York, has performed numerous concerts and operatic roles in Latin America and the United States. Praised by the Mexican press as "youthful and charming, possessing a vast register," Ms. Valdés was a favorite soloist with orchestras in Mexico and performed numerous roles at the Ópera de Bellas Artes, where she made her debut in the role of Gretel in Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*. She made her American debut in 2016 in the title role of Marina in Emilio Arrieta's *Marina* with the Miami Lyric Opera. Ms. Valdés won the First Place and The Roberta Peters Prize in the Opera de San Miguel Competition. Zarzuela's First Place, and Second Place in Opera in the Carlo Morelli competition.

Alexander Yakub Violin

Violinist-composer Alexander "Sasha" Yakub, from Amherst, Massachusetts, has been playing the violin since age 4. He has performed with several ensembles in New York and New England including the Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra, the AHRS Symphonic Orchestra, and Duo 404. He was a Violin Fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center, and winner of the BPYO, Windham Orchestra, and Springfield Youth Orchestra concerto competitions, as well as concertmaster of the MA All-State Orchestra.



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I am especially grateful to my mother, Myoung Ja Lee, for her tireless support and care throughout my journey and this project.

- Clara Kim