

ONLY BREATH LINER NOTES

1. Forgotten Wings

Jami Sieber, electric and acoustic cello, vocals

Kim Rosen, spoken word

*And it was at that age ... Poetry arrived
in search of me. I don't know, I don't know where
it came from, from winter or a river.*

*I don't know how or when,
no, they were not voices, they were not
words, nor silence,
but from a street I was **summoned**,
from the branches of night,
abruptly from others,
among violent fires
or returning alone,
there I was without a face and it touched me.*

*I did not know what to say, my mouth
had no way with names,
my eyes were blind,
and something started in my soul,
fever or forgotten wings,
and I made my own way,
deciphering that fire,
and I wrote the first faint line,
faint, without substance, pure nonsense,
pure wisdom
of someone who knows nothing,
and suddenly I saw
the heavens
unfastened
and open,
planets,
palpitating plantations,
shadow perforated,
riddled*

*with arrows, fire and flowers,
the winding night, the universe.*

*And I, infinitesimal being,
drunk with the great starry
void,
likeness, image of
mystery,
felt myself a pure part of the abyss,
I wheeled with the stars,
my heart broke loose on the wind.*

“Poetry” translated by Alastair Reid from *Selected Poems of Pablo Neruda*, published by Jonathan Cape. Used by permission of the Random House Group Ltd.

2. Sama

Jami Sieber, acoustic cello

Kim Rosen, spoken word

*What is the deep listening? Sama is
a greeting from the secret ones*

*inside the heart, a letter. The branches of
your intelligence grow new leaves in*

*the wind of this listening. The body
reaches a peace. Rooster sound comes,*

*reminding you of your love for dawn.
The reed flute and the singers lips:*

*The knack of how spirit breathes into
us becomes as simple and ordinary as*

*eating and drinking. The dead rise with
the pleasure of listening. If someone*

can't hear a trumpet melody, sprinkle

dirt on his head and declare him dead.

*Listen, and feel the beauty of your
separation, the unsayable absence.*

*There's a moon inside every human being.
Learn to be companions with it. Give*

*more of your life to this listening. As
brightness is to time, so you are to*

*the one who talks to the deep ear in
your chest. I should sell my tongue*

*and buy a thousand ears when that
one steps near and begins to speak.*

“Listening” by Rumi, translated by Coleman Barks from *The Glance*, published by Penguin
Compass. Used by permission of Coleman Barks.

3. Before the Beginning

Jami Sieber, electric and acoustic cello

Kim Rosen, spoken word

Steve Gorn, bansuri flute

*God speaks to each of us before we are made
then walks with us silently out of the night.
These are the words, the numinous words,
we hear before we begin:*

*You, called forth by your senses,
Reach to the edge of your Longing:
Become my body.*

*Grow like a fire behind things
so their shadows spread
and cover me completely*

Let everything into you: Beauty and Terror.

Keep going: no feeling lasts forever.

Don't lose touch with me.

Nearby is the land

they call Life.

You will recognize it

by its intensity.

Give me your hand.

by R. M. Rilke, translated by Maria Krekeler and Kim Rosen

4. River

for Stanley Kunitz (1905 – 2006) and for our fathers

Jami Sieber, electric cello, vocals

Kim Rosen, spoken word

Michaelle Goerlitz, percussion

Steve Gorn, bansuri flute

don benedictson, bass

David Worm, vocals

Rhiannon, vocals

If the water were clear enough,

if the water were still,

but the water is not clear,

the water is not still,

you would see yourself,

slipped out of your skin,

nosing upstream,

slapping, thrashing,

tumbling over the rocks

till you paint them

with your belly's blood:

Finned Ego,

yard of muscle that coils,

uncoils.

If the knowledge were given you,

but it is not given,

for the membrane is clouded

*with self-deceptions
and the iridescent image swims
through a mirror that flows,
you would surprise yourself
in that other flesh,
heavy with milt,
bruised, battering toward the dam
that lips the orgiastic pool.*

*Come. Bathe in these waters.
Increase and die.*

*If the power were granted you
to break out of your cells,
but the imagination fails
and the doors of the senses close
on the child within,
you would dare to be changed,
as you are changing now,
into the shape you dread
beyond the merely human.
A dry fire eats you.
Fat drips from your bones.
The flutes of your gills discolor.
You have become a ship for parasites.*

*The great clock of your life
is slowing down,
and the small clocks run wild.
For this you were born.
You have cried to the wind
and heard the wind's reply:
"I did not choose the way,
the way chose me."
You have tasted the fire on your tongue
till it is swollen black
with a prophetic joy:
"Burn with me!
The only music is time,
The only dance is love."*

*If the heart were pure enough,
but it is not pure,
you would admit
that nothing compels you
any more, nothing
at all abides,
but nostalgia and desire,
that two way ladder
between heaven and hell.
On the threshold
of the last mystery,
at the brute absolute hour,
you have looked into the eyes
of your creature self,
which are glazed with madness,
and you say
he is not broken but endures,
limber and firm
in the state of his shining,
forever inheriting his salt kingdom,
from which he is banished
forever.*

“King of the River” from *Passing Through: The Later Poems New and Selected* by Stanley Kunitz. Used by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

5. Beyond the Light

Jami Sieber, electric cello, vocals

Kim Rosen, spoken word

Michaelle Goerlitz, percussion

Steve Gorn, bansuri flute

don benedictson, bass

Ulali- (Pura Fe Crescioni, Jennifer Kreisberg), vocals

Angelika Kasten, spoken word (German)

*You darkness that I come from
I love you more than the flame
that confines the world.*

*For flame only shines a circle
so those inside are blind beyond the light.*

*But the darkness welcomes everything.
Shapes and flames, animals and me,
how it swallows them,
people and powers –*

*And I have the feeling some vast presence
is stirring all around me.*

I have faith in nights.

by R. M. Rilke, translated by Maria Krekeler and Kim Rosen

Jami Sieber, electric cello
Kim Rosen, spoken word
Ulali (Pura Fe Crescioni, Jennifer Kreisberg), vocals
“Thunder Chant” by Pura Fe Crescioni

*I know the truth! All other truths are through!
People on earth don't have to fight one another.
Come, look at the evening. Come look! Soon it will be night.
What is the problem – poets, lovers, Generals?*

*Already the wind is quiet, already the earth is dressed in dew,
The storm of stars in the sky will soon be still,
And we'll all sleep together under the earth,
We who never let each other sleep above it.*

by Marina Tsvetaeva, translated by Sonja Franetta and Kim Rosen

6. 6 O'Clock News

Jami Sieber, acoustic cello

When the bombs were dropped on March 20, 2003 and the War in Iraq began, I walked over to my cello and this piece came out of my heart and onto the strings of my instrument. It is a lamentation for those who have died and the survivors who will continue to live with the pain of this war for generations to come.

7. Keeping Quiet

Jami Sieber, electric and acoustic cello, vocals
Kim Rosen, spoken word

Michaelle Goerlitz, percussion
don benedictson, bass
Erika Lockett, guitar, spoken word (Spanish)

*Now we will count to twelve
and we will all keep still
for once on the face of the earth,
let's not speak in any language;
let's stop for a second,
and not move our arms so much.*

*It would be an exotic moment
without rush, without engines;
we would all be together
in a sudden strangeness.*

*Fishermen in the cold sea
would not harm whales
and the man gathering salt
would not look at his hurt hands.*

*Those who prepare green wars,
wars with gas, wars with fire,
victories with no survivors,
would put on clean clothes
and walk about with their brothers
in the shade, doing nothing.*

*What I want should not be confused
with total inactivity.*

*Life is what it is about
I want no truck with death.*

*If we were not so single-minded
about keeping our lives moving,
and for once could do nothing,
perhaps a huge silence
might interrupt this sadness
of never understanding ourselves*

*and of threatening ourselves with
death. Perhaps the earth can teach us
as when everything seems dead in winter
and later proves to be alive.
Now I'll count up to twelve
and you keep quiet and I will go.*

“Keeping Quiet” translated by Alastair Reid from *Selected Poems of Pablo Neruda*, published by Jonathan Cape. Used by permission of the SADAIC Latin Copyrights, Inc. o/b/o SCD Chile - 2007.

8. Practice

Jami Sieber, singing bowls
Kim Rosen, spoken word

*Not the high mountain monastery
I had hoped for, the real
face of my spiritual practice
is this:
the sweat that pearls on my cheek
when I tell you the truth, my silent
cry in the night when I think
I'm alone, the trembling
in my own hand as I reach out
through the years of overcoming
to touch what I had hoped
I would never need again.
by Kim Rosen*

9. In Impossible Darkness

Jami Sieber, electric cello
Kim Rosen, spoken word
Benjy Wertheimer, esraj

*Do you know how
the caterpillar
turns?
Do you remember
what happens*

*inside a cocoon?
You liquefy.
There in the thick black
of your self-spun womb,
void as the moon before waxing,
you melt
(as Christ did
for three days
in the tomb)
conceiving
in impossible darkness
the sheer
inevitability
of wings.*

by Kim Rosen

10. **Dance**

Jami Sieber, electric cello
Kim Rosen, spoken word
Julie Wolf, piano, organ
Michaelle Goerlitz, conga, pandero
Kai Eckhardt, bass
Evan Schiller, drum kit, Wavedrum
Ulali (Jennifer Kreisberg and Pura Fe Crescioni), chant
“The Rock Chant” by Ulali

*Dance, when you're broken open.
Dance, if you've torn the bandage off.
Dance, in the middle of the fighting.
Dance, in your blood.
Dance, when you're perfectly free.*

*Struck, the dancers hear a tambourine inside them
as a wave turns to foam at its very top.*

Begin.

*Maybe you don't hear that tambourine
or the tree leaves clapping time.*

*Close the ears on your head
that listen mostly to lies and cynical jokes.
There are other things to see and hear.
Dance music
and a brilliant city inside the soul.*

*God said of Muhammed:
He is an ear. He was wholly
ear and eye. And we are refreshed
and fed by that
as an infant boy is
at his mother's breast.*

--Rumi, translated by Coleman Barks

11. Only Breath

Jami Sieber, electric cello
Kim Rosen, spoken word
Julie Wolf, organ
Benjy Wertheimer, esraj, tabla
Susu Pampanin, bendir, darbouka, riq, finger cymbals
don benedictson, bass
Kai Eckhardt, electric and acoustic bass
Eben Eldridge, spoken word

*Not Christian or Jew or Muslim, not Hindu,
Buddhist, sufi, or zen. Not any religion*

*or cultural system. I am not from the East
or the West, not out of the ocean or up*

*from the ground, not natural or ethereal, not
composed of elements at all. I do not exist,*

*am not an entity in this world or the next
did not descend from Adam and Eve or any*

origin story. My place is the placeless, a trace

of the traceless. Neither body or soul.

*I belong to the beloved, have seen the two
worlds as one and that one call to and know,*

*first, last, outer, inner, only that
breath breathing human being.*

“Only Breath” by Rumi, translated by Coleman Barks from *The Essential Rumi*, published by HarperCollins Publishers, Inc. Used by permission of Coleman Barks.

12. Love after Love

Jami Sieber, electric and acoustic cello, vocals

Kim Rosen, spoken word

Julie Wolf, organ

Michaëlle Goerlitz, percussion

Erika Lockett, guitar

*The time will come
when, with elation,
you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door,
in your own mirror,
and each will smile at the other's welcome
and say, sit here. Eat.
You will love again the stranger who was your self.
Give wine. Give bread.
Give back your heart
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you*

*all your life, whom you ignored
for another, who knows you by heart.
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,*

*the photographs, the desperate notes,
peel your own image from the mirror.
Sit. Feast on your life.*

“Love after Love” from *Collected Poems 1948-1984* by Derek Walcott. Copyright © 1986 by Derek Walcott. Used by permission of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, LLC.

We met in the spring of 2001, at our first and only rehearsal for a concert we had audaciously scheduled without even knowing if we could work together. Instantly – without warming up or getting to know each other we found ourselves riding a powerful current of poetry and music that has continued to teach and inspire us to this day. In those two hours we discovered, quite inadvertently, a compelling new expression of the ancient partnership between poetry and music. Unlike collaborations where the music is designed to be background to the words, we had embarked on in an equal, spontaneous dialogue where the spoken poem is a layer of the music and the music is a voice in the poem.

Since then, with the generous support of Sue Sherman and you who have joined us at our concerts and workshops, we've been adventuring into this alchemy. Great poetry, on its own, can unlock patterns of thought so that gusts of pure insight blow through. Music can literally enter the pulsations of the body and awaken the heart. As we meld the two, we've discovered again and again what mystics, poets and shamen have known for centuries: when you join powerful rhythms with the language of the soul, the mind can't contain the experience and bursts open to an unsayable "Ahhh!" of true wonder.

This is what we wish for you. If, tossed in the converging currents of poems and sound, you find you can't hear and hold onto words and melodies in a familiar way, try opening all your senses and going for the ride. Perhaps you will be carried into moments of revelation – beyond the known territory of your mind.

May this sound and silence contribute in some way to beauty, healing and peace in your life and for all beings.

Jami and Kim

In the course of making this recording we have been blessed to collaborate with musicians from many cultures and poets from around the world and across time. When we meet inside the poetry and music, as Rumi says, we are not "any religion or cultural system." And at the same time each of the many traditions that sound through this CD carries a lineage of wisdom that we who have not lived it can only glimpse. We bow with respect and gratitude.

Our deepest thanks to you who believed in this project and gave us the creative, emotional and financial support to follow through: Sue Sherman, Agu, Eve Ensler, Paula Allen, Richard Sieber, Marilyn and Michael Miller, Coleman Barks, Geneen Roth, Marie Howe, David Whyte, Jodi MacMillan, the Hawaii poetry pod, Leanne Drumheller, Jennifer Berezan, Devi and Stan Weisenberg, Brian O'Donnell, Sagewalker, Greta and Jerome Rosen, Michel Saint-Sulpice, Mary Staton, Margie Carter, Deb Curtis, Karen Kaushansky, Lyn Davis, Noliwe Alexander, Rosetta Saunders, Judy Bierman, Jerah Chadwick, Bob Evans, Steve Davis, Timothy Dallas, Karin and Ron Aarons, John Holliday, Glen Lawler,

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Thank you don for collaborating so beautifully in the pre-production phase.

Our gratitude to all the musicians who so gracefully walked into this project and brought tears of joy to our eyes.

Produced by Jami Sieber, Kim Rosen and Evan Schiller

“Only Breath”, “Love after Love” and “6 O’Clock News” produced by Jami Sieber and Evan Schiller

Executive Producer: Sue Sherman

Sponsored by Belladonna Sanctuary, Berkeley, CA. (put logo here)

Engineered and Mixed by Evan Schiller at Zulu, Seattle, WA.

Additional Recording by don benedictson, Lou Judson and at San Pablo Recorders and Live Oak Studio in Berkeley, California.

Art and Cover Design by ChicNnomad - Stacey Nomad and Andee Rudloph

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Mastered by Ric Vaughan at Spectre Mastering

Jami plays a Jensen Electric Cello

A revolutionary meeting between poetry and music that joins the poems of Neruda, Rumi, Rilke, Tsvetaeva and others with music that moves from vibrant stillness to irresistible world beat rhythms.

Unspoken: The Music of Only Breath, an instrumental version of this cd is available on the web and in retail stores, March 2008

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www.jamisieber.com

www.kimrosen.net



only breath

Jami Sieber & Kim Rosen