



Byre
Theatre

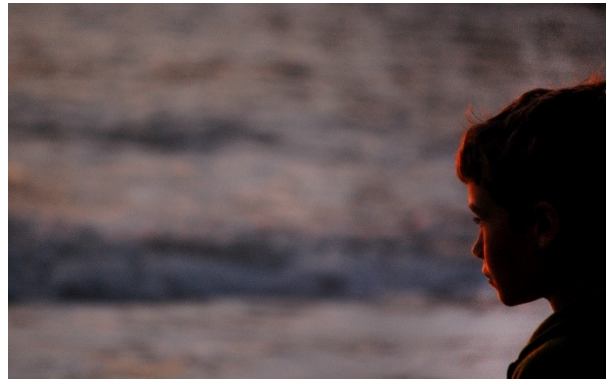


Image: Ray Jacobs

***Turning* – an audio work by Saffy Setohy and Niroshini Thambar Transcript (December 2020)**

00:00 – 01:01 – (*music, birdsong*)

1:02 – Pale sunlight hitting the tops of the trees, the wood's dark, the tops of the trees are bright, bare and bright, there's a spiralling darkness into a cave, long-tailed tits twittering their news in the treetops, chattering. Beautiful golden beech leaves.

1:29 – It's warm, I can feel the sun on my face.

1:37 – We're looking down, over the fields towards St Andrews, and particularly towards the sea and it's cold, but it's very still at the moment. The horizon is flat, and the sea is a dark steely blue and the sky is a... a fairly cold looking blue, as well. A few clouds around today, it's not too bad though. Cold air in my lungs kicking off.

2:06 - There's a really noisy robin in our garden and there's a couple of blackbirds that are brave enough to get in there, but anything smaller than a blackbird, that robin is straight up to them and shouting at them and chasing them off. The bushes are particularly high, I need to get them cut back a bit. The soil is smelling strongly, it's not yet cold enough to lose that and some of the early crop is beginning to peek its way through.

2:35 – 2:40 – (*the sound of children playing*)

2:41 – I was thinking, like, about, like all the wildlife, like, when you go into a sunset and you just see all the little foxes running round, or birds chirping in it and looking at all the trees.

2:56 – I felt... calm and tingling.

3:01 – I felt a tingle in my feet and it like.. it rose up ma legs and then it like faded and made me feel quite cold.

(*soft low string music*)

3:14 – I took off my shoes so I could feel the carpet underneath my feet, I can feel the individual tufts of wool. How strange it is that I can spread out the toes of my left foot and not on my right. The skin of my face and neck had a glow to it because of the cold air outside, that was quite a pleasant sensation. I could feel the touch of my clothes on my skin. I was aware of a heaviness and tiredness about my body which is not to do with really being tired but just being fed up with all these COVID restrictions.

4:01 – (*sound of children playing*) I wish for coronavirus to be gone.

4:04 – I wish for coronavirus to go away.

4:11 – (*yawn*) Yawning. It is simply the best way to end a long day. It unknots the shoulders... it pushes the breath right down through the lungs. Yawning makes breathing so much easier.

4:30 – (*breathing*)

4:35 – I could hear my own breathing. The room is quiet.

4:41 - Snug and warm and quiet and calm.

4:46 – (*clock ticking and breathing*)

4:53: Everything seems to have... slowed down... somehow. (*light piano music comes in*) It's almost dark and the curtains are closed. There is a light in the centre of the room and shadows roundabout. I can hear the wind swirling in the chimney, it's a windy day outside but I'm safe and warm in here. The chair is creaking... I've been sitting on it a long time today. It's a beautiful object, very tactile, made of smooth wood that you just want to touch. The room is full of memories, and although I'm here on my own, it's full of people. Photographs of myself and a friend many years ago when we dressed up and went to the carnival in Venice. I'm in a tartan costume, she's dressed in an Elizabethan dress that she made herself. There are lots of bright colours. There's a mirror. There's a bison that my grandfather brought back from Canada when he went there intending to emigrate as a young man, but came back and married my grandmother, otherwise I wouldn't be here today.

6:30 - (*music getting more tense, long tones*)

6:33 – The shapes are cluttered in the room.

6:40 - How's it possible to be so tense and... relaxed at the same time? Embodied confusion.

6:52 – Hmm, this is... difficult.

6:58 – (*sound of children playing*) My wish is for all the commotion in the world to stop.

7:04 – Empty shelves, bright light... (*tense music tones fade*) big windows but it's dark outside so there's just a sheet of glass and on the other side of that there's blackness and absolutely nothing. I can just make out the texture of grass nearest the window, but it very quickly vanishes into darkness. I used to have a very personal office and this office is just an empty box, and I feel very abstracted in it. Little dashes of white... the shadows, circles... there's virtually no sound, it's very silent in here. I can just about hear somebody in a distant room... smells of cleaning fluids. Disinfectant.

8:17 – (*soft warm long music tones*) Smells... familiar. An old room, in an old house. Waiting for an occasion. Anticipating some kind of familiar, regular... celebration. Tiny fly on a little light. Different pieces of technology, two hard drives, an audio recorder that I'm not using for this, some headphones, good pen, a cheap pen, squeezebox guitar, terracotta curtains,

plants overwintering, there's still a world outside. Down in the valley, up on the hills and beyond, to a world in more turmoil.

9:22 – Dark, dark black, with a hint of a blue far, far away, and an aeroplane way in the distance, some tiny bulbs of light flickering on the horizon. Now I can see the pulsating light of the plane many, many miles away, and inside there's warm and golden glowing. How peaceful, comforting, sheltered, it's home.

10:01 – I'm on my own but I don't feel alone. This feels cosy and safe. It feels like home.

10:14 - (*hooves clopping, horse neighing, horse breathing & snorting*)

10:34 – It's dark again, and I'm in a field with my horse. It's icy cold tonight. It's calm and still, the body's very warm but the face is tingling with the night sky and the night air. It's so clear. There's nothing better, really, than a clear night's sky and a happy horse, in a field with the fresh, clean air.

11:14 – (*music long warm tones*)

11:22 – Riding horses with cold feet in wellington boots against metal stirrups, the horse's breath white in the air and feet getting colder and colder.

11:47 – (*gentle piano music*) The counterpoint of the wind in the trees, the waterfall a mile away, and passing automobiles, the dampening smell of faint leaf mould. Indigo shades of twilight, the whoosh of the universe. I saw the meteor last night. The most spectacular one I've ever seen.

12:18 – (*gentle violin music*)

12:21 – When I remember to, I love looking up at the stars, and I remember one magical night on Iona where there was no light pollution and I wouldn't have seen it if someone hadn't pointed it out to me, but I looked up and saw the Milky Way overhead.

12:45 – I felt cold and I imagined I was on the seashore listening to the water swishing, looking into the night sky.

12:52 – I felt cold because I was just floating in space and getting warmer when I'm getting closer to the sun.

12:59 – I also felt like I was floating in space.

13:01 – My head was kind of tingling, and I felt like there was like an alien UFO above me and I was getting sucked up.

13:19 – (*music fades*) I love being warm and cosy inside when it's dark and cold and wet outside.

13:28 – (*clock ticking*) Easing of the relentless drawing outside to the drawing in. Time for reflection and-

13:35 – Having a meal in a country pub, for example, with a real fire blazing.

13:41 – Shifting light as the seasons turn, time for reflection, recuperation...

13:49 – Feet getting colder and colder, and then coming home in the evening, going into a bath, a warm bath, and as the circulation comes back into the toes, almost itchy with – not even painful, but sort of itchy... itchy feeling as the circulation comes back into the toes. I didn't have central heating growing up, so to keep warm at night layering, layering, piles of blankets, and for a long time I couldn't sleep properly without those really heavy blankets on top of me.

14:35 – I quite like the garish, over the top lights that some people put on their houses at Christmastime. I enjoy the firework displays to bring in the new year, so long as I've someone there to share it with. The colours and sounds and spectacular display against the darkness of the night sky. I like having a hot water bottle at my feet in bed, especially when the cat comes for a cuddle under the duvet.

15:11 - (*music, clock ticking*)

15:51 – I was walking behind my future self. She was ahead of me, going in the same direction. She was wearing a long, old fashioned sort of coat. We knew each other right away. We walked on together and it felt good not to be alone, the two of us together in a silence of understanding one another.

16:20 – (*sound of gentle ocean waves*)

16:36 – The rock pool with all these amazing creatures, beautifully coloured sea creatures, whose lives would be a great deal shorter than ours and mine. Is it worth it? Is being alive worth it? Sparkling and being beautiful for such a short period of time and then disappearing again. Yes. It is better to have lived, but it's hard too.

17:17 – Maybe I see a sea cucumber from the rock pool. What are they busy with? What are they doing?

17:27 – I asked my future self 'are you happy?'

17:33 – My question to myself was 'are you still having lots of fun?'

17:43 – (*sound of children playing*) I asked myself 'did the world change at all in the future?'

17:49 – What is going to happen to the world in the next few years?

17:55 – What's beyond now?

17:58 – I asked the animals in the rock pool if the plastic in the water got better or worse.

18:06 – I asked the sea creatures 'do you want us to carry you over to the ocean so you're not in danger from the seagulls(?)'

18:14 – I asked my future self 'will I live happy without any regret?'

18:19 - and I also asked the animals why am I here?

18:24 – I asked my future self 'do you have any children or are you just single or something?'

18:31 – Did I have a job, and did I have a house?

18:40 – What’s the future like, and am I even gonna be alive?

18:46 – I asked my future self if I’d have a successful life in the future or if I’d just be, like, a normal person? Which I wouldn’t mind.

18:59 – I loved when we were jumping from rock to rock, seeing my future self, and I asked myself ‘why do you look so good?’

19:08 – (*laughter*)

19:10 – What?

19:11 – “Why do I look so good!” (*laughter*)

19:15 – Let’s keep going, let’s keep going...

19:18 – (*music*)

19:26 – My wish is for the world to be a peaceful place.

19:29 – I wish for all my family and friends to be happy.

19:34 – I wish for climate change to be over.

19:36 – I wish that world pollution was gone.

19:40 – My wish is that climate change will end.

19:42 – (*music*)

19:48 – (whispered) I wished that the Earth would heal itself.

19:58 – Shifting light as the seasons turn

20:03 – (*sounds of children playing*) I wished for coronavirus to be gone.

20:07 – I wish for coronavirus to go away.

20:10 – (*music*) Hmm... this is difficult.

20:14 – Time for reflection...

20:24 - The room is quiet

20:26 – I’m on my own but I don’t feel alone. This feels cosy and safe. It feels like home.

20:37 – Now we share care with each other.

20:42 – (whispered) May the next chapter of your story be rich and full

20:47 - 21:50 (end) – (*Soft warm violin, long tones, music fading out*)

Background to Turning

In November 2020, people living in St Andrews and Fife were sent a series of guided audio scores. These invited the listener to be with their surroundings in a specific way, to answer a series of questions and go on an imaginative journey. Their voice responses were recorded by the participants themselves, in their homes, offices and even at school.

These lo-fi crowd sourced audio files have been gathered and arranged to form a new sound work, alongside field recordings and sound specially composed by Niroshini. The work is designed to be listened to at a significant turning point, as the sun set on the shortest day of a difficult year.

Inspired by meditations, podcasts, audio dance classes and the company of the radio during lockdown, this sound work encourages us to step away from screens and overwhelming visual information, into the twilight. Turning our attention to small details, vast imaginings and the things that connect us, it is intended to be a reflective and hopeful counter to transmissions of fear in our uncertain times.

The piece premiered at sunset on the shortest day of a difficult year, 21 December 2020, 3.30pm (GMT).

Thank you to the people who contributed their voices

Mary Henderson, Finlay McDermid, Jo Mulligan, Gail Pallin and Jane Pettegree

and

James Rimmer and James Wurster from the University of St Andrews

and

the P7s at Leuchars Primary School, with their Teacher Matthew Bowen and Head Teacher Laura-Rachel Watson

Safety is our highest priority. All activities were designed and delivered with safety in mind in response to the latest guidance.

Many thanks to Ray Jacobs for permission to use his image, *Sea Gazing*, to promote this project and to artist Joanna Young for peer support and lending her 'outside ears' throughout the project.

With thanks to Creative Scotland's Performing Arts Venues Relief Fund, supporting venues, freelance artists and creative practitioners.

For more information please visit:

<https://www.saffysetohy.co.uk/>

<http://www.niroshinithambar.com/>

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