

Sequences from
Woman at Point Zero - The Opera
for Merit, Duduk (dbl Recorder, Fujara, Jews Harp, Crumhorn) Recorders, Taegum, Sho, Accordion

Music by Bushra El-Turk
Libretto by Sabrina Mahfouz
Choreography by Maria Koripas
Co-created by Merit Ariane Stephanos
VERSION: JULY PERFORMANCE
VERSION

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Composer's Note

These sequences are part of what will become an opera.

I aim to develop a cross-cultural musical language with an emphasis on the vocabulary of movement to become a vivid blend of gesture and music. Where does performing and gesture in music end and it becomes dance? Can we create art that contains seamless boundaries between the art forms? These themes will be explored with a focus on an eclectic ensemble of vocalists and instrumentalists in collaboration with the choreographer Maria Koripas, to experiment with musical and gestural techniques which inform each other resulting in combined notions of cultural fusion in music and movement.

Overture

On the improvisation spectrum:
1) then 2) then 3).
Bar 33 - choose between you who begins to distort and the order.

Andante, with intensity ♩=72

poco a poco espressivo

Firdaus

Ney

Taegum

Recorders

Bass Recorder

mf

steady

pp

Duduk

Solo

mf

Sho

Andante, with intensity ♩=72

poco a poco espressivo

Accordion



10

poco a poco accel. e cresc.

Firdaus

Ney

Tg.

B. Rec.

Duduk

Sho.

Accord.

Start the beginning of Firdaus Lullaby Theme
ad Lib., anchoring on D and then improvise on it

mf

pp

poco a poco accel. e cresc.

19

Firdaus

Ney

Tg.

B. Rec.

Duduk

Sho.

Accord.

Firdaus Lullaby Theme
anchoring on D with more freedom
in improv
solo

mf

ornament
sporadically

pp

27

Firdaus

Ney

Tg.

B. Rec.

Duduk

Sho.

Accord.

Gradually distort melody
from here

gradually enter
in same rhythm as others

Gradually distort melody
from here

pp

36

Firdaus

Ney

Tg.

B. Rec.

Duduk

Sho.

Accord.

45

Firdaus

Ney

Tg.

B. Rec.

Duduk

Sho.

Accord.

Alternate between 2 different sonorities gradually increasing

Alternate between 4 multi-phonics or 3 different sonorities gradually increasing

Alternate between 5 multi-phonics or 3 different sonorities gradually increasing

Alternate between 3 different sonorities gradually increasing

Alternate between 2 dissonant chords of choice

Alternate between 3 dissonant chords of choice

To D. Rec.

ff

ff

ff

ff

ff

pp

Transition to Scene 1

Scene 1

On the improvisation spectrum:
Accordion - fixed notes in free time,
Taegum - improvise based on given material
Recorder - improvise in the spirit of

Airy and carefree ♩=80 Senza misura

54 (Spoken)

Firdaus

You want me to speak?
Listen to me.
I, Fridaus, have been put behind these prison bars to die.
By first light of morning, I will be gone from this place.
From any place known to this world.
Now, I must tell you why, because your eyes, your eyes, ask me to.

Tg.

mf sfzp

Accord.

Airy and carefree ♩=80 Senza misura

60

Firdaus

Tg.

mf sfzp mf

D. Rec.

mf

Accord.

66

Firdaus

p Ung Ung There was a

improvise bssed on Overture melody,
gradually moving away from the melody
sometimes with Carmen
Imitate the musical gestures of an Egyptian bird
found in the villages

Tg.

D. Rec.

Accord.

71

Firdaus

time.

I was a child. In the fields. I lay with a

Tg.

improvise, imitate the musical gestures of an Egyptian bird found in the villages, enter in fragments sometimes with Hyelim

D. Rec.

Accord.

75

Firdaus

boy A boy— my age We laughed, and pressed our bo - dies I felt a long - ing.

Tg.

D. Rec.

Accord.

80

Firdaus

A child, so young, so free, Mo - ha - - - - dein and me. (Spoken)

Suddenly, as we roll and press together, shouts come from home, from Ummi, my mother she shouts, Firdaus, come home now! How I run, shake hay from my legs, scared of what is to come. Did she see me? I run. Did she see us? I run. Did she see? Run. Did she? Run. Did? I - Then, I lay she made me lay, on the table...

Tg.

D. Rec.

Accord.

On the improvisation spectrum:
No.2 - As written with some decoration
This becomes No.4 improvise around given notes

Scene 2 - FGM

85 $\text{♩}=100$, , **Almost screaming** $\text{♩}=100$ *f*

Firdaus

Ney

Tg.

D. Rec.

Knife Knife bet - ween my

non vib.

p

mf

non vib.

p

mf

Descant Recorder non vib.

p

mf

gliss.

94

Firdaus

Ney

Tg.

D. Rec.

legs Was it glass Was it flames bet - ween my legs? the pain the pain bet-

gliss.

gliss.

101

Firdaus

Ney

Tg.

D. Rec.

Duduk

Sho.

Accord.

ween my legs They cut a - way a piece of me

To B. Rec.

Bass Recorder

Crumhorn

pp

p

109 **Musical interlude**

Firdaus

Ney

Tg.

B. Rec.

Crhn.

Sho.

Musical interlude

Accord.

f

gliss.

pp

3

3

[illegible]

117

Ney

Tg.

B. Rec.

Crhn.

Sho.

Accord.

gliss.

121

Ney

Tg.

B. Rec.

Crhn.

Sho.

Accord.

gliss.

gliss.



125

Firdaus

Scream scream her hands hold me Down on the ta - ble as I scream Your

(might be octave lower)

Ney

Tg.

B. Rec.

Accord.

mf

mf

mf

gliss.

gliss.

gliss.

ff

pp

ff



133

Firdaus

child It's me um - mi um - mi It's me Fir -

Ney

Tg.

B. Rec.

Sho.

Accord.

gliss.

gliss.

pp

pp

ff

138

Firdaus

daus How could you do this to me?

Ney

Tg.

B. Rec.

Crhn.

Sho.

pp

Accord.

pp gliss. pp ff p

143 Musical interlude

Firdaus

ah

Ney

Tg.

B. Rec.

Crhn.

Sho.

ff pp

Musical interlude

Accord.

ff

149

Firdaus

Ney

Tg.

B. Rec.

Crhn.

Sho.

Accord.

154

Firdaus

Ney

Tg.

B. Rec.

Crhn.

Sho.

Accord.

Duduk

==

159

Firdaus

Wrapped Wrapped ban - - da ges_ blood Left to cry Cry_____ on the

Ney

Tg.

B. Rec.

Duduk

Sho.

Accord.

165

Firdaus

ta - - ble where they eat I wrap arms A - round my

improvise around this

Ney

Tg. ornament gliss. gliss.

B. Rec. improvise around this

Duduk

Sho. around D?

Accord.

170

Firdaus

arms Rock rock rock my - self to sleep Rock rock ma - ma ma - ma Rock sleep ma - ma ma -

improvise on bayati maqam

Ney

Tg. gliss. gliss. gliss. gliss. gliss.

B. Rec.

Duduk

Sho.

ornament

Accord.

Scene 3 - Lullaby

176

Firdaus

ma ma - ma is co - ming she is al - most here

Duduk

Sho.

182

Firdaus

Duduk

Sho.

The musical score for measures 182-185 features three staves. The Firdaus staff (top) is in treble clef and contains a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes. The Duduk staff (middle) is in treble clef and features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, followed by rests. The Sho. staff (bottom) is in treble clef and contains a complex pattern of eighth notes and rests, with a double bar line after measure 183.



187

Firdaus

Sho.

Sho.

LULLABY
Spoken Text

Rock, rock, rock
Mama is coming, she's almost here,
Sleep little darling, on the bamboo rug

Libretto

Nami Nami ya sgheera
Yalla ghfee 3al HaSeera
Ya 3aSfuram Handa'a
sha3rik aswad wimna'a
willi Hebbik bi busik
willi shufik yitra'a

BEFORE LIGHT LIGHTt
Spoken Text

My parents dead. My uncle fed me. Clothed me...Touched me.
Brought me to his home in the City of Cairo, and here there are mirrors
and there is...

On the improvisation spectrum:
No. 2 As written with some decoration

Firdaus

f $\text{♩} = 108 \text{ (max)}$
 (Loud breath only)
 (In Out In Out) (loud whisper) (breath) (loud whisper) (breath) (loud whisper) (breath) (loud whisper) (breath) Loud breath only (loud whisper) (breath)

Light Light? Light Light? Light

Ney

Loud breath only
 Instrument in hand
 (In Out In Out)
f

Into instrument
 T

Tg.

Loud breath only
 Instrument in hand
 (In Out In Out)
f

Into instrument
 T

B. Rec.

Bass Recorder

Loud breath only
 Instrument in hand
 (In Out In Out)
f

Into instrument
 T

Fj.

Fujara

Loud breath only
 Instrument in hand
 (In Out In Out)
f

Into instrument
 T

Sho.

Loud breath only
 Instrument in hand
 (In Out In Out)
f

Into instrument
 T

Accord.

$\text{♩} = 108 \text{ (max)}$
 (In Out In Out)
f

Into instrument
 T

203

(loud whisper) (breath) semi-improvisatory

Firdaus

Light?

At my un-cle's there is ligh - - -

(loud whisper) *fzpp*

30s

(This note can be an A, first time only to give Merit her note)

Ney

Tg.

B. Rec.

Fj.

Sho.

Accord.

212 *f* *sf=pp* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f*

Firdaus - (t) (t) (t) ligh - - - - (t) (t) t - t - t - ta! t - t - ta! so stron (g) ung (g)

Ney ornament idiomatically *f* *ff* (loud whisper) *p* *ff* ornament idiomatically

Tg. ornament idiomatically *f* *ff* (loud whisper) *p* *ff* ornament idiomatically

B. Rec. ornament idiomatically *f* *ff* (loud whisper) *p* *ff*

Fj. *f* *p* (loud whisper) *ff* ornament idiomatically

Sho. *f* *p* (loud whisper) *ff* *p* *ff*

Accord. *p* (loud whisper) *ff* *p* *ff*



219 *sf=pp* *f* (loud whisper) (spoken)

Firdaus Ne - ver seen such bright - ness and thiS! ssssss Take abreath Blow it out Ou - - (t) t - t - t - t - t - t - t wipe it Light

Ney *f* (sung) (played) Light!

Tg. *f* (sung) (played) Light!

B. Rec. (sung) (played) Light!

Fj. *f* (sung) (played) Light!

Sho. *p* (Breathe in and out) Light!

Accord. *p* (Breathe in and out) Light!

Musicians begin sounding instruments more but still include breath
Fragmented tango
May repeat the following section from here

226

Firdaus

Light (t) Nnnnnnn Fin - gers

Ney

Tg.

B. Rec.

Fj.

Sho.

Accord.

fp *mf* *fp* *f* *f* *p* *f*

p *f* *p* *sfz* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *ta!* *p* *f* ornament idiomatically

p *mf* *sfz* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *ta!* *p* *f* ornament idiomatically

p *mf* *sfz* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *ta!* *p* *f* ornament idiomatically

p *mf* *sfz* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *ta!* *p* *f* ornament idiomatically

ta!

ta!

230

Firdaus

My face I've ne - ver seen my face I've ne - ver seen my face but I know it is my face I know it is

Ney

Tg.

B. Rec.

Fj.

Sho.

Accord.

ha! *p* *mf* *p* *sfz* *p* *mf*

ha! *p* *mf* *p* *sfz* *p* *mf*

ha! *p* *mf* *p* *sfz* *p* *mf*

ha! *p* *mf* *p* *sfz* *p* *mf*

ha!

ha!

233

Firdaus

my face_ I've ne - ver seen_ my face I've ne - ver seen_ my face but_ I know_ it is my face I know_ it is my face_ my face_

Ney

p *f* *p*

Tg.

p *f* *p*

B. Rec.

p *f* *p*

Fj.

p *f* *p*

Sho.

Accord.

236

Firdaus

space_ bet - ween my nose_ and mouth my nose_ and_ mouth

Ney

Light! *f* *p* *f* *p* *sfzp* *f* *p* *f*

Tg.

Light! *f* *p* *f* *p* *mf* *sfzp* *f* *p* *f*

B. Rec.

Light! *f* *p* *f* *p* *mf* *sfzp* *f* *p* *f*

Fj.

Light! *f* *p* *f* *p* *mf* *sfzp* *f* *p* *f*

Sho.

Light! *f* *pp* *f* *n* *sfap* *f*

Accord.

Light! *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *sfzp* *f* *p* *f*

240

f p f

Firdaus

— and nose— and (t) Nnnnnnn— and pout thin lips— no good no good— thin lips no man will— want thing lips Eyes—

Ney

p f ta! ornament idiomatically *p f* Muah! *p mf* *p sfz p*

Tg.

p f ta! ornament idiomatically *p f* Muah! *p mf* *p sfz p*

B. Rec.

p f ta! ornament idiomatically *p f* Muah! *p mf* *p sfz p*

Fj.

p f ta! ornament idiomatically *p f* Muah! *p mf* *p sfz p*

Sho.

ta! *p f* Muah! *mf p mf p*

Accord.

p f ta! ornament idiomatically *p p f* Muah! *p mf* *p*

244

Firdaus

— two brown black white brown black brown white Nose round— big bad round— nose I've ne - ver seen— my face I've ne - ver seen—

Ney

mf *p*

Tg.

mf *p*

B. Rec.

mf *p*

Fj.

mf *p*

Sho.

mf

Accord.

mf *p*

246

Firdaus

— my face but— I know— it is my face I know— it is my face— my face— Head down, now

Ney

Tg.

B. Rec.

Fj.

Sho.

Accord.

Spoken Text

I go to school
I get a certificate
I am proud
I am proud
My uncle married me off
I run away from beatings
I run away from trouble a lot of trouble
Sharifa
Sharifa
A woman who says
A woman's power is in her body
She takes my body
Gives me a life beyond anything I have ever seen
I am a successful prostitute
Powerful
Respectable

I have a friend
A respectable man named Di'aa
A writer
A thinker
We talk together
Only ever talk
He respects me and what I do
Until one day, that day he paid me so my arms are open
And after it's over his cruel mouth opens

Libretto:

Let me speak
Let me speak
Let me speak
He says
You, Firdaus
You, Firdaus
You, Firdaus
are not respectable

Not respectable
no
no
no
So it's all been a dream?
An illusion of power-
they all laughed at me,
called me names?
Walls cave in
I breathe in the bricks...
Not respectable...
these words
two words
they murder my heart.

Scene 11

On the improvisation spectrum:
No.1 in 'free' time towards No.2 As written with some decoration

- Play each note *Ad libitum*, starting without decoration then decorating and phrasing idiomatically.
- Sho and accordion can gradually add notes to their own chords

Senza misura

Chord 1

c.40secs

Chord 2

c.40secs

Chord 3

c.40secs

Firdaus

249

Ney

pp poco a poco cresc.

Tg.

pp poco a poco cresc.

B. Rec.

Bass Recorder

pp poco a poco cresc.

Duduk

Duduk

pp poco a poco cresc.

Chord 4

c.40secs

Chord 5

c.40secs

Chord 6

c.40secs

Firdaus

252

Ney

Tg.

B. Rec.

ff

subito pp

Duduk

(I put Ney notes onto Duduk)

pp poco a poco cresc.

To Fujara

Sho.

ff

subito pp

Accord.

ff

subito pp

Spoken Text
I will not be
Unrespectable.
I have my secondary
school certificate.
I find office work with it.
At work I find love
In love I find a new,
Respectable Firdaus
I find my Ibrahim...

Libretto:
My heart warmed
soft-lipped Ibrahim kisses me
could this be
could it be
is this what it is to be free?
To fly inside love
in love,
me and my Ibrahim,
as one pair of wings
we soar
we fly -

THEN
He married,
not me not me not me.

Scene 13 - Ibrahim

On the improvisation spectrum:
No. 1 As written, in free time,
towards No.2 with some decoration,
then towards No.5 In the spirit of the overture melody.

255

Firdaus

Sho.

fills in when accordion doesn't play

becomes more free

Accord.

pp poco a poco cresc.

Sc.13 Ibrahim

Version 1 if used with words

My heart warmed
albi malyan biddafa
soft-lipped Ibrahim kisses me
qabbalani
could this be
could it be
is this what it is to be free?
howal aHsas bilHorreyya keda
To fly inside love
in love,
innak ti'Teer fil Hobbi bгнаheen
me and my Ibrahim,
as one pair of wings
we soar
we fly -

THEN
He married,
not me not me not me.

Version 2 if just music and movement, basic story outline for the scene, highlighted parts what can be shown with music and simple movement?:

* Firdaus meets a man she is in awe of, Ibrahim. She is shy, but he is friendly and kind. They meet in her office as she hands him some papers.

* He picks her up in his car to drive her home and they talk for hours. She feels like she has met someone who truly understands her.

*She is flying high with love, everything suddenly makes sense to her. The world is beautiful and everything is a joy.

*She is daydreaming about the future she will have with Ibrahim, when she sees him holding hands with the chairman’s daughter, announcing their engagement. He is no longer interested in Firdaus. She is devastated.

(sung?)
THEN
He married,
not me not me not me.

Spoken text
(may or may not be over music)
My heart had opened.
My soul had been shaken,
thinking it would be saved
by the freedom of love.
But love is not freedom,
it is a prison,
worse than this one.
Chains of lies.
So my heart closed.
My soul was still...

Once again, I now seek only truth.
Money is truth,

Power is truth
and I know, don't I, how to get those.

Scene 15 - (Queen of Egypt)

On the improvisation spectrum:
Ney - No. 6
Taegum -No. 4
Fujara - No.4 but also incorporating a broken drone.

264

Firdaus

Rose petal.
Touch.
Look.
Eyes.
Rise.
Rise.
Rise.

Someone burst my heart,
so I apply oil to my hair,
I sink my body under water
I wear heels and lipstick
I lick my lips for men who pay
and it mends, it mends,
it makes me feel strong again.

Pan.

Fujara

Instructions for Firdaus:
*Words repeat 3 times through as spoken text (in street-like fashion)
Then with each repeat, sing bold word and increase number of sung bold words
gradually sing words recitativo using given notes*

Singing starts here
↓
4th time

268 **Mantra-like**

Firdaus

Spoken 3 times
Become more and more street and upbeat

Eyes
Eyes up
chin up
hands up to take cash.
I carry myself as a Queen.
I am Queen of Egypt.
I am golden skin and golden touch.
I take it, take it all.

Percussive fragments
on maqam

Eyes
Eyes up
chin up
hands up to take cash.
I carry myself as a Queen.
I am Queen of Egypt.
I am golden skin and golden touch.
I take it, take it all.

Eyes
Eyes up
chin up
hands up to take cash.
I carry myself as a Queen.
I am Queen of Egypt.
I am golden skin and golden touch.
I take it, take it all.

Eyes
Eyes up
chin up
hands up to take cash.
I carry myself as a Queen.
I am Queen of Egypt.
I am golden skin and golden touch.
I take it, take it all.

Ney

emphasise this note in your improvisation
after Merit sings them

Tg.

Pan.

Percussive fragments

5th time

6th time

7th time

8th time

272

Firdaus

Eyes hands_ queen Eyes hands_ queen Queen of E-gypt Eyes hands_ queen Queen of E-gypt gol-den Eyes hands_ queen queen of E-gypt gol-den gol-den

Eyes up chin up hands up to take cash. I carry myself as a Queen. I am Queen of Egypt. I am golden skin and golden touch. I take it, take it all.

Eyes up chin up hands up to take cash. I carry myself as a Queen. I am Queen of Egypt. I am golden skin and golden touch. I take it, take it all.

Eyes up chin up hands up to take cash. I carry myself as a Queen. I am Queen of Egypt. I am golden skin and golden touch. I take it, take it all.

Eyes up chin up hands up to take cash. I carry myself as a Queen. I am Queen of Egypt. I am golden skin and golden touch. I take it, take it all.

Ney

improvise freely hovoring on the notes that Merit sings

Tg.

Sustain the notes below when Merit sings them become more and more passionate

Pan.

9th time

10th time - same

276

Firdaus

Eyes hands_ queen Queen of E - gypt gol - den gol - den Eyes hands_ queen Queen of E - gypt gol - den gol - den

Eyes up chin up hands up to take cash. I carry myself as a Queen. I am Queen of Egypt. I am golden skin and golden touch. I take it, take it all.

Eyes up chin up hands up to take cash. I carry myself as a Queen. I am Queen of Egypt. I am golden skin and golden touch. I take it, take it all.

Ney

Tg.

Pan.

In ecstasy/quite free (let's decide maqam)

278

Firdaus

Queen I take it, I take it all

High point/flourishes

keep retaking note, with vigorous vibrato til end

Ney

Tg.

Pan.