

L.A. play

by Singer Joy

characters:

Cajeput 1 - silent, m

Cajeput 2 - distractible, m

Scrub/Brush - nervous, nb

Lavender - distant, f

Ginkgo - a god(dess), any gender

i. Cajeput twins, Scrub/Brush

[lights up suddenly on two Cajeput trees, and a shrub in the distance. the trees are identical, except that Cajeput 1 is a bit taller. the two stand about a foot apart from each other, stepping together-- left feet crossing wider left, right swinging round and forward in a kind of zoot suit swing.

they foist arms toward the light, shielding their faces with leafy fingers and twisting at the hips and neck. they repeat this graceful shimmering gesture as if somnolent, in perfect synchronicity.

Scrub/Brush, upstage of the twins, crouches meanly on a ridge. he scuttles close to the floor, nervous and busy with nothing except envy and mockery.]

SCRUB: there are three

[four taps on collarbone with three fingers]

trees here, and of them two think themselves grand fellows: stiff-legged, shrub-headed purveyors of shade scraps in the neighborhood.

[two taps with foot]

thin as rails! spindly boys with deltic arms trying upward into crispy chips held too high skyward. those boys. when an afternoon breeze pushes through,

[two taps on upper arm with two fingers]

it wallpapers their windward trunk sides, soaking there all at once.

[beat]

then a third, her smell coming in the hot dust with daytime Luna like a tower which presses close against nonporous bark. three

[two taps on jaw with one finger]

little ones all self-concerned in a patch among thousands such in this valley, among thousands.

ii. Lavender enters, exits

[a Lavender tree enters, begins to play and sing. she is graceful and void of intention.]

LAVENDER:

where the rush is an aroma i walk
in four inches of river
on a bed of stone with no skimmers across it

[she repeats this, improvising on the basic melody and wandering across the stage from UR to DL at a protracted pace. the dancers continue, and their work becomes arachnid, limbs accidentally intertwining in a forceful wind. Cajeput 2 becomes increasingly interested in Lavender's song, while C1 remains focused on the dance.]

SCRUB: there is a checkerboard in the ravine, which stretches under miles of bridge shadows.

[two taps on collarbone with two fingers]

another weave in the rust-plaid of the West.

[one loud foot tap]

that is perhaps where, perhaps under the width of heat that says "no thank you" to water, she meanders. nothing craves her, nor could, for the little nourishment she offers.

[two taps on calf with two fingers]

she drives past the flattest junkyards, which are built like steppes into the very rock. those patches continue, until it's cross-hipped roofs and a blanket fold mountain range that might crumble before it would slice into even pieces.

[one tap with foot, two taps on collarbone with two fingers]

mummified in terracotta in a painstaking garden, that brief showman of imported soil, she grows taller than a boy but not quite high enough to be an altar.

[Lavender wafts out, still singing, still ambling.]

iii. Cajeput 2 solo, in stillness

[action slows as Cajeput 2's focus on Lavender increases. by the time she exits the stage, everyone but C2 is frozen. he looks at where she was, all energy a beam after her shadow. his movement becomes less representational, and something of a man is visible through his bark.]

CAJEPUT 2: i think this canopy is but scarce to hide from the sun.

help me, brother, hold it up.

today's brilliance wilts my bark especially.

brother, i think i never knew that color on you-- something like a hum in your turnip roots with gentle tiger stripe in grey.

i think some insect long-residing in this mantle has now fled, and all eastward things are illumined as if from within.

[beat]

Lavender's scent is fled down the avenue, perhaps forever to a cruel breeze or lingering funk.

help me, brother, withstand it.

i think i never knew how songs could be, just of themselves-- every commuter rail and evolution and diner fixture and yes, you, brother, were all separate beasts owing to their own herds.

[beat]

now i see there is a shepherd.

he bows his crook with young Lavender's scent, angles into deep afternoon when blooms sweat of themselves.

it's a love-time, salivary, indifferent to the always hot smells-- that trollop the Orange, every sizzling Lemon and Hibiscus sister in this dirt sodden country. they hold nothing to her first cool entrance in your desert life, like no Palm or Jackpine before her.

help me, brother, hold up all things but love.

[beat]

i think now i have really seen you-- oven-baked and hitching it on the asphalt is
how you cracked open, badder than me by a foot and a half.
i see what things are owed and to whom.
i step carefully leaf-by-leaf with you, brother, flake of slit-up crust to flake.

iv. Ginkgo's dance

[a Ginkgo tree enters from upstage, all clad in yellow. hir leaves are constantly fluttering, falling, creating a slime trail. through the lights they are even yellower, throwing dapples at the backdrop. Ginkgo is bathed from all directions, and makes glacial and occasionally Butoh movements straight downstage.

with hir entrance, life resumes, slowly at first and then eventually at its usual speed. the twins continue their repetitive dance. C2 carries flickers of human memory. Scrub is still furtive, but gradually smooths out.]

SCRUB: in the barrio skyline five lady fingers waggle against this distant dirty brush. turtlenecked palms fight with telephone wire garottes. leaves are the villi of a mile-long intestine pimpled with shortened metal shafts.

[one tap with palm on chest, softly]

as darkness emerges, so too do auras of halogen orange which illuminate brief city moments; a tacky star overhanging a doorway punched out of adobe, a cliff face struggling to extend its verdant hairline, and a hocket song formed by a jalopy and dog cackles.

[by now Ginkgo is farther downstage than both Scrub and the twins. several of hir leaves have fallen, but many remain.]

from a veinless window to a horizontal afternoon and timeless travel, we finally exit into something like graying evening, sticky with fruit fingers again.

[Scrub shrinks into himself as all lights fade on the continual swaying of the taller ones onstage.]

END OF PLAY