

Becoming

By Johanna Selleck



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Becoming

Johanna Selleck

- 1** Spring 14'00
- 2** Summer 10'40
- 3** shakuhachi cadenza 3'12
- 4** Autumn 9'41
- 5** Winter 7'36
- 6** Interlude 5'27
- 7** Finale 8'53

Total time: 60 minutes

Recorded in Move Records studio

Editing: Vaughan McAlley

Mastering: Martin Wright

Booklet notes: Johanna Selleck

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Merlyn Quaife (soprano)
Dean Sky-Lucas (countertenor)
Jerzy Kozlowski (bass)
Adam Simmons (shakuhachi)
Lynette Rayner (violin)
Zachary Johnston (violin)
Barbara Hornung (viola)
Caerwen Martin (cello)

Becoming is based on two forms of Japanese poetry – *haiku* and *renga*. The brief, vivid images that are essence of *haiku* express something deeper than words – the sharing of feelings and perceptions that are universal and transcend the barriers of language and culture. Reinforcing this idea of connection, *Becoming* uses *haiku* in 3 languages (French, English, and Tibetan) by poets from tenth-century Japan through to contemporary Australia. *Becoming* is structured in the style of *renga*, which is an ‘elongated’ form of *haiku* incorporating linked stanzas composed by different poets.

Becoming was commissioned by Australian pianist Len Vorster for the 2006 Port Fairy Spring Music Festival, at which the first movement was performed. The complete work was premiered at the Castlemaine Festival in 2007 accompanied by a projection of images relating to each *haiku*. Traditionally, the opening verse sets the season and occasion. For *Becoming*, the seaside town of Port Fairy was the inspiration, and the first poem is written by the composer herself. The song cycle is divided into 4 sections based on the seasons, plus a finale. Each section begins with a ‘universal’ image relating to nature, moving to a more personalized perspective. The poems form an overall narrative suggesting cycles of birth, death, and renewal.

The composer envisages that performances of *Becoming* should respond to time and place by incorporating translations into different languages according to who, when, and where it is performed. This would ideally be

accompanied by visual images that reflect the surroundings. Thus, it is intended that the piece undergoes continual metamorphosis – always ‘becoming’ something new in response to the changing environments in which it is performed.

Composer

Johanna Selleck is a composer, flautist, and musicologist. She holds a PhD from the University of Melbourne, where she is an honorary fellow. Her compositions have been commissioned and performed by renowned artists in Australia and internationally, and her research and compositions are widely published. Prizes for composition include the Percy Grainger Prize and the Albert Maggs Award.

Haiku poets

Bunya no Asayasu (circa 900) was a well-known *haiku* poet who lived during the Heian period and the reign of Emperor Daigo. The particular poem used in *Becoming* was written at the request of the emperor during a poem-writing contest at a garden party. It is included in the esteemed poetry anthology *Hyakunin Isshu*.

Janice Bostok (1942–2011) has been described as the ‘doyenne’ of Australian *haiku*. Born in Mullumbimby, NSW, Janice was fascinated by the power of *haiku* to

express the Australian landscape, and her poetry became world-renowned. Johanna was honoured to correspond with Janice during the composition of *Becoming*.

KWH. This poet came to Johanna’s attention when she discovered an anonymous book of *haiku* at the State Library of Victoria. After many years, she located the author, who wishes to say only the following: ‘The author grew up in Adelaide and Canberra. He has spent most of his adult life in the sociological tundra at the periphery of society’.

Shuji Miya (1912–1986) began writing *tanka* as a teenager living in Hokuriki, north of Tokyo. His father was a book seller, and under his influence, Miya developed a love of books including foreign literature. He served in the Second Sino-Japanese War and later became a professional poet. Miya founded an influential *tanka* group called ‘Cosmos’.

Natsume Seibi (1749–1816) was known as a rich merchant from Edo and associate of renowned Japanese poets Issa and Otokuni. Seibi learned the art of *haiku* from his father and became one of the leading *haiku* masters of his time. He was also a scholar of Chinese and Japanese literature.

Masaoka Shiki (1867–1902) was a poet, literary critic, and journalist (he worked for the newspaper company Nippon). He is considered to be a great innovator of *haiku*, helping to revitalise and modernise the art at the start of the twentieth century. Shiki

is particularly known for his work with the poetic form of *tanka*.

Sonojo (1647–1726) was a renowned *haiku* poet, one of two female disciples (the other being Ni Chigetsu) of the celebrated *haiku* master, Matsuo Bashō (creator of the poetic form known as *haibun*). Sonojo was married to another well-known *haiku* poet, Shiba. She was also highly respected for her skills as a medical practitioner.

Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916) was a Japanese novelist and *haiku* poet of the Meiji Era. A student of Masaoka Shiki, he was revered as a writer and well known for his novel *I Am a Cat*. He was also a scholar of Chinese poetry and British literature. His portrait appeared on the front of the former 1000-yen note.

Fujiwara no Toshiyuki (880–907) was a calligrapher, poet, and officer of the Japanese Imperial Guard. He is known for his contributions to numerous poetry anthologies including *Hyakunin Isshu*. He is listed as one of the ‘Thirty-Six Immortals of Poetry’—a group of revered Japanese poets.

Jack de Vidas (1914–1997) was born in Broken Hill and died in Brisbane, Australia. A physician, he worked at the Adelaide Children’s Hospital and later for the Royal Flying Doctor Service. He was also a musician and a founding member of the Australian Haiku Society. His first collection of *haiku*, titled *Bells Are Calling*, was published in 1996.

Performers

Barbara Hornung is an Australian violist. She received a BMus (Hons) from Adelaide University in 1984. After touring Europe in the Australian Youth Orchestra, Barbara studied at The Royal Conservatory of The Hague. She freelances in orchestras, is a keen recitalist and chamber musician, a dedicated teacher of violin and viola, and has recorded with ABC Classics and Move Records.

Zachary Johnston is a contemporary and folk violinist, string educator, and mandolinist. He is a regular member of prominent Australian ensembles such as Arcko Symphonic, 3 Shades Black, and the BOLT Ensemble. Zachary completed a MMus in 2013 and has participated in numerous international events including the 2014 and 2016 Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt, and in 2015, the Bang on a Can Summer Festival in Massachusetts, USA.

Jerzy Kozlowski has been involved in all aspects of the Melbourne music scene ranging from medieval music with the vocal group Acord to solos in many Australian premieres of vocal works. His rich bass voice has been heard in all the major Australian choral ensembles and over 60 operas with companies including Opera Australia, Victorian Opera, and Melbourne Opera.

Caerwen Martin has over 20 years international-touring experience including concerts in the USA, Scandinavia, the Balkans,

South Africa, Japan, Taiwan, and New Zealand. Caerwen also works in film and television as a composer, cellist, and actor and is the artistic director and founding member of Silo String Quartet. Awards include the Orloff Family Trust Scholarship and the Athenaeum Prize.

Lynette Rayner holds a BMus (Hons) from the University of Adelaide and MMus from the University of Tasmania. She has worked in Germany, Norway (in the Oslo Philharmonic), and the Netherlands, where she was a member of the Het Gelders Orkest Arnhem Philharmonic. She currently lives in Melbourne and performs regularly with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Victoria, and the Melbourne Chamber Orchestra.

Dean Sky-Lucas has gained an international reputation for performances throughout the world. As a countertenor, he has performed the operas of Handel, Rameau, and Vivaldi as well as recording and performing world premieres of living composers. Also renowned for his work as a collaborative keyboardist, from the harpsichord through to the modern piano, Dean has performed and broadcast for ABC FM, Radio New Zealand, and the BBC.

Adam Simmons is one of Australia’s most prolific and varied artists. He is an acclaimed multi-instrumentalist and a specialised educator in improvisation, instrumental technique, and shakuhachi. As an artistic director, Adam has overseen festivals such as

the Wangaratta Festival of Jazz and Blues as well as the Festival of Slow Music in Ballarat. He has also worked as the editor for the Australian Jazz Journal, *Dingo*.

Merlyn Quaife is one of Australia's most highly regarded sopranos and renowned as a performer of great versatility. Her regular performances include opera, oratorio, chamber music, lieder, and contemporary music. She is a great champion of new music and has had many works composed for her. In 2013, she was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for services to music.

SPRING

Mackerel sky
The sleepy fishing village
awakens music

(Johanna Selleck)

Rain dances on a
Million feet, a buried seed
Jigs to the rhythm

(KWH)

Hira-hira to kaze ni nagarete cho hitotsu	A single butterfly, Fluttering and drifting In the wind
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(Masaoka Shiki. Translation to English, R.H. Blyth)

Déborde du haut du baril l'eau dans le soleil	Spilling at the rim of the barrel water into sunlight
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(Janice Bostok. Translation to French, Kenneth Fea)

SUMMER

Tsuyu-bare ya tokoro-dokoro ni ari no michi	The summer rain clears up: Here and there Processions of ants
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(Masaoka Shiki. Translation to English, R.H. Blyth)

Akaki hi no umi ni ochikomu— atusa kana	The red sun Sinking down into the sea— Heat!
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(Natsume Sōseki. Translation to English, R.H. Blyth)

Sem shor na Kyed kyi tsen Nag zhin chag	Falling in love your name becomes a mantra
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(Janice Bostok.
Translation to Tibetan, David Templeman)

Un duo. L'amant et le rossignol chantent sous la lune.	A duet. The lover and the nightingale sing to the moon.
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(Jack de Vidas. Translation to French, Kenneth Fea)

AUTUMN

Aki kinu to Me ni wa sayaka ni Miene domo Kaze no oto ni zo Odorokarenuru	Autumn has come invisibly. Only the wind's voice is ominous
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(Fujiwara no Toshiyuki. Translation to English, Kenneth Rexroth)

The fanfares of man
Distant pipings on the wind
To a poet's ear.

(KWH)

Shira tsuyu ni Kaze no fukishik Aki no no wa Tsuranuki tomenu Tama zo chirikeru	In a gust of wind the white dew On the Autumn grass Scatters like a broken necklace
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(Bunya no Asayasu. Translation to English, Kenneth Rexroth)

Ma voix perd sa mélodie. Vieillir	My voice losing its melody. Growing old.
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(Jack de Vidas. French translation, Kenneth Fea)

WINTER

Mikazuki no The winter blast
hikari wo chirasu Scatters the light
nowaki kana Of the crescent moon
(Natsume Seibi. Translation to English, R.H. Blyth)

Pale sun pretending.
The air is brittle and falls
In glassy sprinkles.

(KWH)

Sora hibiki tsuchi hibiki The sky is howling, the
shite fubuki suru earth is roaring
Sabishiki kuni in the furious snowstorm.
zo waga unmare guni Loneliness dominates
 the country
 where I was born.
(Shuji Miya. Translated to English, Susumu Noritoshi)

I wake to a broil
Of words, crowding thunderclouds
Invite my lightning.

(KWH)

FINALE

Par chin. Chu zhim Gone. The lip-smacking
döpay gyuma buwa nams. Froth of eager illusion.
Mi lam ngo dzin The dream has curdled.
nangzhin dra.
(KWH. Tibetan translation, David Templeman)

Près de sa tombe At the graveside
la fauvette soulage the warbler sings away
ma peine. my grief
(Jack de Vidas. French translation, Kenneth Fea)

The harpist plays on
after the song has ended
scatter of jewels

(Jack de Vidas)

Shizuka nari keri Become so quiet
Devenir très calme Become so quiet
Shi war chag Become so quiet
(Sonojo. Translations (in order)
by Higginson, Fea, and Templeman)

Sources of haiku:

R.H. Blyth, *A History of Haiku*, Vol 2 (Japan: The Hokuseido Press, 1964); Janice Bostok, *Silver Path of Moon* (Australia: Post Pressed, 1996); Lorin Ford, ed., *A Hundred Gourds* (online journal) 1:1 (December 2011); W.J. Higginson, *The Haiku Seasons* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1996); KWH, *A Book of Haiku* (Heidelberg, Vic: 1982); Shuji Miya, *Testimony of Life: Shuji Miya's Tanka*, trans. Susumu Noritoshi (Nagoya: Poetry Nippon, 1990); Kenneth Rexroth, *One Hundred Poems from the Japanese* (New York: New Directions, 1955); Jack de Vidas, *Bells Are Calling* (St Lucia, QLD: Paper Wasp, 1996).



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