

# 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

Ink artwork: Junko Azukawa

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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)

**B**ecoming 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



## 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 keru            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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