

Hawkwood Centre for Future Thinking

Artist in Residence November 2022 Blog

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" At the end of the day, we do what we can."

Music comes to me in all sorts of ways. Sometimes, it treads softly like the morning sun, finding their way to my singer's ear other times, they appear to leap from the shadows, demanding to be heard. Believe me when I say, during my stay at Hawkwood, I learned the power of both. Or rather, I learned to be the observer to my own music, soon realising, that the music and words which found its way to me came from above. It came from the trees, it came from the rain, it came from the timeless words of a first edition of Keats in the library, and it came from silence.

On my very first day, arriving from the meandering chaos of London, as we drove up to Hawkwood College I rolled down the taxi window to take the air, fresh with invitation and embrace. Rolling hills of green and autumn hues held me in my place, suitcase in hand, as I made my way to the reception. ON the first day, it rained, and I was grateful.

"At the end of the day, we do what we can." This is the first thing I wrote.

I now realise, I started my creative process by already imagining that whatever I would create, it would be what I could muster. I decided that there would be no strenuous effort to create a masterpiece, but rather there would be a newly acquired need to create moments which seemed to come at me like meteors. This was my intention for my residency, in any case.

So, I proceeded to walk the suggested circular path. I made my way up past the most majestic birch and oak trees laden with hints of red and golden hue, I spotted an opening to a green meadow. Tentatively, I made my way across the fields, the rain slowly subsiding, and I was gifted the view of Hawkwood and its surroundings. Notebook in hand, I wrote the following.

"All is still. All is silent. The light grows dim, yet I can still hear it sing. Circling round and round I hear the clocks in everything. If only the world would cease to move, then perhaps we can be found again, I can still rejoice at the sound I hear, the story I know I must write, and again, at the end of the day, we hear the clocks in everything. "

Two hours later, I made my way hastily to the piano studio. The Yamaha grand seemed to gleam and morph into a new friend, begging for conversation. I sat down, and, for the first time, I found myself thinking of the words I wrote, but chose not to sing them. Instead, I decided to let the piano be the voice.

What followed was the composition of 4 piano suites, aptly called "The Variations: Ode to a Leaf". I had amassed 4 distinct kinds of leaves from my walks, and each time I played, I placed a single leaf on top of the piano, with the words I had written that day to remind me of that sentiment I felt. One can say I composed music in these suites that were extensions of a single moment of appreciation

for the wonder I found in the wisdom of trees, branches, and leaves. It brought me back to my very first love, poetry.

On Days Two and Three, I carried on with this daily walk of 2- 3hours, and when it rained, I made my way to the library. Keats toyed with me from day one, and of course, Coleridge soon after. I believe in intuition, as opposed to random inspiration. Everything happens for a reason, so it was no surprise that I opened to Coleridge's remorseful "Kubla Khan". The words "sunless sea" filled me with instant desire for my beloved Mediterranean Sea, and I made my way to the piano studio.

"Sounding out the bells" was composed later that night, and it was a night filled with a need to release the turmoil of the lonelier mindset of artists, the kind that writes itself with sorrow, only to be sung as way to find one's joy. It was so personal to me, and I knew that I had to unleash it. Before I arrived to Hawkwood I knew that I would compose what was unsaid, and, what had changed. As humans, we have a beautiful way of capturing the ways of the world through the arts, and when we do so without judgment, the most personal and unwavering authentic stories unfold.

At the end of Day three, through to the end of Day Four, the weather turned into a sunlit heavenly dome. Making my way further this time round, in the afternoon, coffee in hand, I made my way across the rolling hills, and stopped when I came across cows, sleepily and gloriously sitting in their slumber. I was transfixed by them. I hurriedly wrote in my notebook:

"Remember the ones before you

Echoe in their stride

Even in our waking hour,

The moon still shines

And we still are one with the world beneath us".

Now, one may think I could have written that inspired by the glorious full moon that week, but this was written inspired by the cows of Hawkwood. Do not ask, the creative process is a funny thing.

That night, I made my way excitedly to the studio. This time, instead of my regular tea, I had purchased the local Cider (yes, Cider can be inspiring). I suddenly thought of Ireland, a place I lived and studied in, and started playing a joyful little pentatonic riff, repeatedly. I thought of the fields that day, and the grazing animals, and the fact that we are lucky to be alive to witness the power of nature, all at the same time connected to the world above and within.

And so," What lies beneath "was composed that evening. On a musical note, I had not played that joyfully without singing since I can remember. It was as if I remembered why piano was my first instrument, and how voice made its way to help me converse with it.

All: what is music but a conversation about the connection of one's soul, heart and the world?

Thank you Hawkwood, for giving me back my love of music.