Firefly

de
Silvia Peláez

traducción de
Tanya Huntington

(fragmento en inglés)

FIREFLY®
Musical monodrama
Opera in one act
for soprano, actor, chamber ensemble, multimedia and electroacoustic

Original libretto
SILVIA PELÁEZ

CHARACTERS
ALCIRA–Middle-aged poet (44 years old), active in the Student Movement (Soprano)
SOLDIER, YOUNG POET, LEADER, (Same actor)

WHERE THE ACTION TAKES PLACE
University campus in Mexico City, 1968
8th floor, Humanities Tower, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Women's restroom inside the Tower

TIME
1968

Note: An integration of multimedia projections is suggested that is neither literal nor descriptive, insofar as possible, but rather evocative in order to convey the atmosphere of the scenes of delirium and the general context. The texts in quotes are an excerpt from *El payaso tiene la palabra* (*The Clown Has the Floor*), a text by León Felipe, and one of Alcira's poems, respectively.

0. OVERTURE

Alcira is in an office on the 8th floor of the Humanities Tower. It is 9:45 on the evening of September 19, 1968. She has just finished printing out several flyers that she holds in her hands. She hears loud noises, like firecrackers. She looks out of the window and a gust of wind carries the leaflets away. She tries to catch them. She finds herself surrounded by a whirlwind of flyers. Onscreen, thousands of leaflets over images of young people at student protests around the world. Finally, she catches one.

1. INVASION

ALCIRA
Propaganda. Yes.
Brigades. Yes.
Meetings. Yes.
Academic self-management. Yes.
Autonomy. Yes.
Struggle. Yes.
Freedom. Yes.
Onward! Yes.

A loud noise is heard, and in the distance, a voice on a megaphone.

ALCIRA
What's that noise?
I trap words
with tooth and claw.
What's going on…?

Outside and below noises are heard, voices, shouts.
The electricity is cut off. Only the pale moonlight enters. Alcira looks out the window.

What's this I hear?
A thundering sound
Explodes in my chest,
A rolling thunder stuns my mind.
Metal against metal, the bullet detonates
and explodes full blast.

Night fell unawares.
Nine forty-five.

What do I see?
Their boots crush, like egg shells,
University autonomy.

Students and professors are subdued,
Charged with bayonets;
Their faces beaten with hard rifle butts;
Where are my friends, my comrades?
Where are Revueltas and the rest?

Look, there, look, the young people... There.
Brought to a halt by military torture.
Hawks and vultures have arrived.
Students and professors, facedown.
I watch them, powerless to do anything. Anything.

Faces on the ground.
Hands clasped behind their necks.
What do I hear? Fear.
Do you hear it, too?
What do I smell? Helplessness.

There are poets down below, my friends.
Poetry against intolerance.
No, no! Let them be!
This stench of fear emanates from me.
Blood spilled, for nothing.

There is no more green grass,
only the dead green of hard helmets,
of stiff legs, rigid green,
of brown bullets.
Only dark red.
Save yourselves.
Hide.
Help me, León Felipe.

She picks up the book of poems.

Danger is a whirlwind.
Be brave.
Resist.
Poetry will save us.
That is my weapon.

She opens the book and reads.

"Who am I?
The wind makes no reply,
no one else makes any reply.
Who am I? ... Silence.... Silence..."

2. THERE'S NO ONE HERE

Alcira is nervous, she looks out of the window every now and then, clinging to the book of poems by León Felipe.
She looks for a place to hide.

ALCIRA
Hide, where?
Leave? Impossible.
Behind a chair? No.
Under the desk? No.
Inside a book? No.

Stealthily, Alcira exits into the hallway.
She enters the men restroom: A sink with a long mirror above it. To one side, the door of the toilet stall.
Voices on the megaphone and distant noises. Some shots fired into the air.
Soldiers who march, their steps blending in with the plinking of a dripping faucet, and the pages of the book that Alcira leafs through. She splashes water on her face.
She discovers the image of her countenance in the mirror, disappearing and reappearing.

ALCIRA
Who am I? Yes, I know who.
My name? I'll tell you.
What am I doing here? I struggle, yes.
How do I live? I wander,
I pursue the night,
I trap words and poetry,
and I struggle.
Yes, I am Alcira.

A SOLDIER draws near. The sound increases, joining the fearful beating of Alcira's heart.
She hides in the toilet stall and glues her ear to the door.
Enter the SOLDIER.
Both at the same time.

SOLDIER
What am I doing?

They are practically children.
There's no one here.
Only emptiness.
There's no one here.

ALCIRA
I am no one now.
The wind…
I am invisible.
Silence…
I hope he doesn't see me.
Or I'm one dead poet.

SOLDIER
What am I doing?
Compelled to suppress,
annihilate, arrest, kill.
There's no one here.
Only silence.
There's no one here.

ALCIRA
Protect me, León Felipe.
Prevent him from seeing me.
I am invisible.

The silent wind…

The Soldier walks through the restroom and discovers his image in the mirror.

SOLDIER
There's no one here.
Just a fearful man.
And that's me.
I don't recognize myself.

The Soldier discovers the flyers, he picks them up. He shouts:

Captain, there's no one here!

He exits, taking the flyers with him.

ALCIRA
He's gone already,
and silence remains.
There's no one here.
Here, there is no one.

No is here.
There's no one here.

She rushes over to the faucet for a drink of water.
Then she curls up, frightened.

3. THE EYES ARE NOT HERE

It is the fifth day of her confinement. The restroom is bathed in a nocturnal, bluish light.
Alcira seems to whisper something. Alcira nods off, then wakes, she is restless, she stands up.
She looks out the window.

ALCIRA
Seven o'clock already, on the fifth day...
How long will this torment go on?...
Dawn. There's no reply?
You fall silent. And they are still out there.

The eyes aren't here,
there are no eyes here.

Tanks like slow scarabs;
students like defenseless crickets,
and me, an extinguished firefly.
When shall I see the light of day?

The eyes aren't here.
There are no eyes here.
They are out there somewhere.
There are no eyes here to sleep.
Insomnia.

Where are my friends?
Where are my poet sons?
I, Alcira, mother of poetry,
Trapped, confined, subdued...

The eyes are no longer here.
There are no eyes here.
They are beyond, in the crushed dry grass...
Earthquake of the soul!
They are beyond, in the desolate field.
They are beyond, watching the soldiers.

Invasion of the fatherland!

My eyes are beyond.
The eyes aren't here,
Plum black night,
Black night.
My eyes are down there below.

Continued…

(There are 4 more scenes).