



ANGEL'S BONE

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Du Yun  
Royce Vavrek

Winner of the 2017  
Pulitzer Prize for Music

## ANGEL'S BONE

### Composed by

Du Yun

### Libretto by

Royce Vavrek

### Conducted by

Julian Wachner

## CAST

**Mrs. X.E.** Abigail Fischer

**Mr. X.E.** Kyle Pfortmiller

**Girl Angel** Jennifer Charles

**Boy Angel** Kyle Bielfield

### **Man on the TV**

Thomas McCarger

### **Female Customer/TV Host**

Melanie Russell

## NOVUS NY

Stuart Brezczinski,

*Oboe/English Horn*

Adam Cockerham, *Lute*

Anna Elashvili, *Violin*

Stephanie Griffin, *Viola*

Ashley Bathgate, *'Cello*

Moran Katz, *Clarinet*

Micah Killion, *Trumpet*

Ian Rosenbaum,

*Percussion/Drumset*

Alex Sopp,

*Flute/Alto Flute/*

*Bass Flute*

Ben Vokits, *Tuba*

## THE CHOIR OF TRINITY WALL STREET

Eric Brenner\*

Timothy Hodges

Linda Lee Jones

Clifton Massey

Thomas McCargar

Scott Mello

Timothy Parsons

Melanie Russell

Jonathan Woody

### **Additional vocals**

Melissa Attebury

Sarah Brailey\*

Paul D'Arcy

Meg Dudley

Brian Giebler

Helen Karloski

Tim Krol

Edmund Milly

Daniel Moody

\*soloist

*Kyle Bielfield appears  
courtesy of Sony Music En-  
tertainment Australia Pty Ltd*

Angel's Bone  
had its premiere at  
PROTOTYPE on  
January 6, 2016 at  
3LD Center for Art and  
Technology NYC.

Originally commissioned by  
the Mann Center  
for the Performing Arts,  
Philadelphia.

Completion commissioned by  
Beth Morrison Projects  
and HERE.

World premiere co-pro-  
duced by Beth Morrison  
Projects, HERE, and  
Trinity Wall Street.

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supported, in part, by public  
funds from The New York  
City Department of Cultural  
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the City Council.

<u>1</u>	Procession	<u>14</u>	Scene VI: Ignition
<u>2</u>	Scene I: A Prism, A Video, A Flurry	<u>15</u>	Scene VI: Brick J
<u>3</u>	Scene I: I've Been Good to You	<u>16</u>	Scene VI: Fully Devoured <i>(instrumental)</i>
<u>4</u>	Scene I: Found in the Garden	<u>17</u>	Scene VI: Battered, Bruised, Beaten, Bloody
<u>5</u>	Scene II: Clawfoot	<u>18</u>	Scene VII: The Taste of Your Kisses
<u>6</u>	Scene II: A New History	<u>19</u>	Scene VII: Empty Arteries
<u>7</u>	Scene II: What I'd Do For You	<u>20</u>	Scene VII: A Bag of Feathers <i>(instrumental)</i>
<u>8</u>	Scene III: Smiles	<u>21</u>	Scene VII: Mercy
<u>9</u>	Scene III: Feathers are Prickly Things	<u>22</u>	Scene VII: Promises
<u>10</u>	Scene IV: I've Been Blessed	<u>23</u>	Scene VII: Gestation <i>(instrumental)</i>
<u>11</u>	Scene V: We Will Fly Away	<u>24</u>	Scene VIII: Legendary on TV
<u>12</u>	Scene V: Taking Orders	<u>25</u>	Brick J. (Bonus Track)
<u>13</u>	Scene VI: The Blessings		

## **WOLRD PREMIERE PERFORMANCE**

### **Director**

Michael McQuilken

### **Scenic Design**

Matt Saunders

### **Sound Design**

Du Yun

### **Sound Engineer**

Jay Eigenmann

### **Lighting Design**

Yi Zhao

### **Costume Design**

Kate Fry

### **Projections Designer**

Hannah Wasileski

### **Choreographer**

Christy Lee

## **STUDIO RECORDING**

### **Executive Producer**

Trinity Church Wall Street

### **Recording, Editing, Mixing and Mastering Engineer**

Marc Urselli

### **Associate Engineers**

Sascha Van Oertzen  
Gintas Norvila

### **Produced by**

Du Yun

### **Recorded on**

June 12 and 13, 2017  
at National Sawdust

### **CEO and Artistic Director, National Sawdust**

Paola Prestini

### **Label Director, VIA Records**

Jeffrey Zeigler

### **Production Manager, VIA Records**

Justin Wong

### **Artwork by**

Shahzia Sikander

### **Layout by**

Michael Cina and  
Hardy Stewart

## ANGEL'S BONE LINER NOTES

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Steve Smith

"A work that gave me nightmares," the *Washington Post* music critic Anne Midgette wrote in 2016 after encountering *Angel's Bone*, "yet one that I would nonetheless see again." Testimony to the efficacy of any work of art seldom is stated so bluntly and surely. When such an observation is voiced among cognoscenti who know the opera canon – and, more, understand what the operatic art form is capable of doing, and being – then attention must be paid.

Acclaim for *Angel's Bone*, the second full-length opera by the Shanghai-born composer and performer Du Yun, was hearty and widespread. The buzz was substantial: for music that shifted boldly and confidently among disparate modes of expression, including some wholly foreign to the opera house; for the elegance and specificity that have become hallmarks of Royce Vavrek's work as a librettist; for the surefooted dramatic arc that the two creators achieved

in tandem; and for the uncompromising performances of onstage cast and offstage ensemble alike.

Happily, in this instance attention was indeed paid. In 2017, *Angel's Bone* was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Music — an extraordinary honor for an edgy, rule-flouting opera dealing with the sensitive subject of human trafficking, albeit transposed into a literary, lyrical framework concerning angels fallen to Earth.

That the two other Pulitzer finalists in 2017, Ashley Fure and Kate Soper, were also women added to the luster and satisfaction of this achievement. In an interview I conducted with Du Yun for The Log Journal, National Sawdust's online outlet for music journalism and criticism, she welcomed the attention that had come as a result of this all-female trifecta, especially in the wake of recent activism including the #HearAllComposers hashtag campaign on Twitter.

When she first received word of the award, Du Yun happened to be in Abu Dhabi, where

she had participated in Culture Summit 2017. “I’m not usually in contact with UNES- CO people; I’m not usually in contact with foreign policy people,” she said. “And a topic that they’re very concerned about is, what does art mean for societies, and how can societies integrate art to move forward?”

Interviewed by a major newspaper in the United Arab Emirates, she said, she was asked when she might bring *Angel’s Bone* to that country, “because trafficking is hugely problematic in Dubai. So I feel like a lot of places around the world are very hungry for works that provide that platform.”

That an opera commissioned by the Mann Music Center in Philadelphia, nurtured by Trinity Wall Street, Beth Morrison Projects, and HERE Arts Center in New York City, and given its premiere production during the 2016 PROTOTYPE Festival in Manhattan might have resonance for audiences in Dubai — and in Shanghai, and anywhere else it might be presented in the future — speaks directly and powerfully to the universal potency that great art ideally can have.

Those productions, no doubt, will come in time. Meanwhile, this recording will help to bring Du Yun’s powerful, painful work to audiences everywhere — a tremendous boon, because in its honest yet artful and sensitive treatment of a harrowing subject, its bold juxtaposition of music styles (*bel canto* opera, punk rock, electronica, and more), and its confident mix of soloists representing the disparate disciplines of opera, pop music, cabaret, and musical theater, *Angel’s Bone* has much to share — and much to teach. On record, even without its striking visual component, Du Yun’s opera retains its electric impact.

*Steve Smith is director of publications for National Sawdust. He previously wrote about music as a freelance correspondent for The New York Times, and served as an editor for the Boston Globe and Time Out New York.*

## COMPOSER'S NOTE

Have you ever walked the streets of Phnom Penh, Cambodia? The girls wave at you, smile coyly and offer you things in simple English that make you blush. The girls (sometimes a boy or two) look like little animals, bright eyes and jet-black hair. They are half human, half animal – operating on instinct. You may say that you have never been there and that this story sounds too exotic?

Alternatively, I suppose you live closer to New Jersey or New York? Both areas have a huge trafficking phenomenon. Jackson Heights, Queens has been an epicenter for human trafficking in NYC and New Jersey. The United Nations cites there are between 27 and 30 million modern-day slaves in the world, while the US. State Department cites that 600,000 to 800,000 people are trafficked across borders every year, and UNICEF reports that across the world, there are over one million children entering the sex trade every year.

But what about the middlemen, the pimps; who are they? Their stories come in many shapes and forms. Why? How? Why do they make the choices they make? Greed? Conviction? Desire? Lust?

Art does not solve problems. Art, at its best, functions to provoke and suggest. When we choose to have our characters sing, we tackle a phenomenon: we too, can be any of these people — angels or not, middleman or not.

## SPECIAL THANKS

My profound gratitude goes to my collaborators- Royce Vavrek, Julian Wachner, Beth Morrison, HERE, Michael McQuilken, Abby Fischer, Shahzia Sikander, VIA, National Sawdust, Mann Center for the Performing Arts, Habib Azar, Phil Moffa, ICE, and James Egelhofer.

Mad thanks to the cast and the musicians.

And to Trinity Wall Street, for their unwavering support on this project.

— *Du Yun*

## ARTIST'S NOTE

*The Agon Series* in conversation with *Angel's Bone* highlights the multivalent and universal nature of fear, terror, might, control and loss of power. Flight, a trenchant historical motif, reimagined marks the realm of the imagination as well as the search of internal enlightenment. Story-telling possesses innate ways of laying bare issues around power hierarchies, redaction, perception of authority and independence. Art also offers a revelatory experience. It allows one to dig into the unknown and to be challenged by the mysteries of the world, both real and imagined. The paintings embrace the theme of strife – the struggle for the truth.

— *Shahzia Sikander*

## BIOS

## DU YUN

Du Yun, (Composer) born and raised in Shanghai, China, now based in New York, is a composer, performer, performance artist, curator, and activist working at the intersection of orchestral, opera, chamber music, theatre, cabaret, pop music, oral tradition, visual arts, electronics and noise. A truly international artist, she is one of the most exciting and groundbreaking thinkers working today. Known as chameleonic in her protean artistic outputs, her music is championed by some of today's finest performing artists, ensembles, orchestras and organizations around the world. In addition, Du Yun has also made works in the art field.

## ROYCE VAVREK

Royce Vavrek is a Canadian librettist who has been called "the indie Hofmannsthal" (*The New Yorker*), a "Metastasio of the downtown opera scene" (*The Washington Post*), "an exemplary creator of operatic prose" (*The New York Times*), and "one of the most celebrated and sought after librettists in the world" (*CBC Radio*). His notable projects include *JFK* and *Dog Days* with David T. Little; *27* and *The House Without a Christmas Tree* with Ricky Ian Gordon; *Song from the Uproar: The Lives and Deaths of Isabelle Eberhardt*, *Breaking the Waves* and *Proving Up* with Missy Mazzoli; *O Columbia* with Gregory Spears; *The Hubble Cantata* with Paola Prestini; and *Midwestern Gothic* with Joshua Schmidt.

## **JULIAN WACHNER**

At Trinity Wall Street, music director Julian Wachner oversees an annual season of hundreds of events. He serves as Principal Conductor of Trinity's resident contemporary music orchestra NOVUS NY, The Trinity Baroque Orchestra, and The Choir of Trinity Wall Street. As an opera conductor, Wachner has most recently appeared with The San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, L. A. Opera, New York City Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, Juilliard Opera, and with multiple Beth Morrison Projects at the Prototype Festival, BAM, the NYCO Vox Festival and at National Sawdust. With multiple Grammy nominations to his credit, Wachner has recorded on the Chandos, Naxos, Atma Classique, Erato, Cantaloupe Music, Arsis, Dorian, Acis, and Musica Omnia labels. He is the composer of a catalogue of over 100 works, published exclusively by E.C. Schirmer. He is represented worldwide by Opus 3 Artists.

## THE CHOIR OF TRINITY WALL STREET

Peerless interpreters of both early and new music, The Choir of Trinity Wall Street has changed the realm of 21st-century vocal music, breaking new ground with an artistry described as “blazing with vigour...a choir from heaven” (*The Times*, London). This premier ensemble, under the direction of Julian Wachner, is increasingly in demand internationally, making appearances at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, the BAM Next Wave Festival, Paris’s Théâtre des Champs-Élysées and London’s Barbican Theatre. In addition to its Grammy-nominated Israel in Egypt CD, The Choir of Trinity Wall Street has released several recordings on Naxos, Musica Omnia, VIA Records, ARSIS, Avie Records, and was also featured on the Pulitzer Prize winning and Grammy-nominated work *Anthracite Fields* by Julia Wolfe.

## NOVUS NY

NOVUS NY is Trinity Church Wall Street’s contemporary music orchestra, under the leadership of Trinity’s Director of Music, Julian Wachner. Hailed by *The New Yorker* as “expert and versatile musicians,” its members perform new music from all corners of the repertoire, meeting “every challenge with an impressive combination of discipline and imagination” (*New York Classical Review*). In addition to its proud work on *Angel’s Bone*, NOVUS has helped pioneer a number of major new operas including Ellen Reid’s *Winter’s Child*, Missy Mazzoli’s *Breaking the Waves*, Laura Schwendinger’s *Artemisia* and Wachner’s *Rev 23*. NOVUS NY has forged strong links with key players on the contemporary music scene, collaborating on several world premieres and recordings with composers including Paola Prestini, Hannah Lash, Stewart Copeland, Elena Ruehr, Trevor Weston, Tarik O’Regan and Daniel Felsenfeld. It was NOVUS NY’s Carnegie Hall debut, made with a formidable pairing of Ives and Ginastera, that prompted *The New York Times* to declare: “Adventure and ambition go hand in hand at Trinity Wall Street.”

## SCENE I

### 1. Procession

*(A house in the American suburbs. A woman, MRS. X.E., prepares a meal in the kitchen. SHE wears a fashionable yellow dress, bright red lipstick and an old apron. SHE stares at a small television that sits on the counter playing a soap opera. MR. X.E., her husband, quite a few years older, walks into the kitchen and pours himself a cup of coffee. HE then sits down at the kitchen table looking at his wife who pays him absolutely no attention. When HE tries to talk, SHE makes chopping noises to cut him off. HE walks out to the front yard and smokes a cigarette. ANGELS sing.)*

### 2. A Prism, A Video, A Flurry

#### **CHORUS**

Heaven is a prism  
That throws its stories,  
In spectral color,  
Onto the wings of its citizens.

Always asleep,  
Always awake,  
Always singing,  
Always infinite,  
Always miniature,  
Always sunrise,  
Always harvest.

Heaven is a flurry,  
Pure and blinding.  
A whiteout of memories,  
A constant fluttering.

*(Back in the kitchen, MRS. X.E. becomes transfixed by the story in the soap opera. SHE sings to the TV, which SHE imagines is in dialogue with her.)*

### 3. I've Been Good to You

#### **MAN ON THE TV**

You've become bitter...  
Cold to me.

#### **MRS. X.E.**

I've been good to you.

Available, affectionate, attractive.  
I do everything you ask, everything:  
In the kitchen, in the laundry, in the bedroom.  
You have failed us.

***MAN ON THE TV***

I didn't choose this!

***MRS. X.E.***

I've been good to you.  
Supportive, submissive, seductive.  
But I am done with being generous,  
This is not the dream you promised me.  
We don't default.

***MAN ON THE TV***

You want me with my tail between my legs?

***MRS. X.E.***

I need you to starch your collars,  
Comb your hair,  
Trim your beard.  
I need you to spoil me.  
I need you to come home with a week's work  
Lining your pockets.  
I need you to be handsome again.  
I need you to be good to me.

***MAN ON THE TV***

You're troubled....

***MRS. X.E.***

I've been good to you.

***MAN ON THE TV***

...thoughtless...

***MRS. X.E.***

This is not the dream you promised me.

***MAN ON THE TV***

...tyrannical...

***MRS. X.E.***

What if I don't love you?  
What if I never loved you?  
What if I deserve more?

#### 4. Found in the Garden

*(MR. X. E. bursts in from outside, interrupting MRS. X.E.'s dialogue with the television. HE stands in the doorframe holding a body in a large dirtied sheet. MRS. X.E. doesn't even look at him. HE is excited.)*

**MR. X.E.**

You'll never believe,  
Never believe,  
What I tripped over in the garden!  
Cursing my shoelaces as I  
fell in the compost...

**MRS. X.E.**

Dinner's almost ready.

**MR. X.E.**

Wounded creatures.  
Bloodied faces, twitching.  
Do we save them?  
Or put them out of their misery?

**MRS. X.E.**

Wash up for dinner.

**MR. X.E.**

Runaway children,  
Human eyeballs poking out of a sheet of dirt.

**MRS. X.E.**

I fried the beans I've blanched and froze,  
Peppers finely diced,  
Unseasoned, spiceless.

**MR. X.E.**

Not runaway children.  
Not even close.  
Poking from the dirt were feathers.  
Large, glistening white feathers.  
Broken feathers.  
Like an eagle's blanched white  
Angels!  
Angels fallen in the brambles.

**MRS. X.E.**

*(turning around, finally)*  
Angels?

**MR. X.E.**

You've always loved angels.

**MRS. X.E.**

*(with excited desperation)*

What have you found?

The softest...

What have you found?

What have you found?

What have you found?

**SCENE II**

**5. Clawfoot**

*(The BOY ANGEL and GIRL ANGEL are placed in a clawfoot tub, their broken, gnarled wings pouring out of the confines of the basin. Outside of the room, MRS. X.E. smokes a cigarette and paces, while MR. X.E collects cleaning supplies. The angels wail in agony clutching each other, cold and confused...)*

**6. A New History**

**BOY ANGEL**

We will make our new history.

**GIRL ANGEL**

We will make our new history.

**GIRL ANGEL**

Your face is red.

**BOY ANGEL**

Your cheek is bleeding.

**GIRL ANGEL**

Your lips cut open.

**BOY ANGEL**

Your eyes, swollen.

**BOY ANGEL AND GIRL ANGEL**

We were right to come back.

We were right to come back.

**MRS. X.E.**

Pinch me!

Harder!

*(he does)*

No no no no no no no.

An Angel is good fortune,

We are not fortunate people!

**MR. X.E.**

God is rewarding us for years of struggle.  
For putting us through hell,  
He is offering us his grace.

**MRS. X.E.**

*(still not convinced)*  
We've been graced with beautiful things before...  
Only to be stolen away.  
He is tricking us,  
A holy spirit out to crush my soul,  
Yet again.

**BOY ANGEL**

People are naturally generous,  
People are naturally good,  
Helpful, kind, welcoming.

**GIRL ANGEL**

We will make our new history.  
They would never hurt us.  
I know they'd never hurt us.

**BOY ANGEL**

They would never hurt us.

**MRS. X.E.**

We have been waiting for a sign.  
A gesture of good fortune.  
We need this.

**MR. X.E.**

Let us help them,  
Restore their beauty,  
Clean the soil from their fingernails –

**BOY ANGEL AND GIRL ANGEL**

They will attend to our bruises,  
They will put us to bed,  
They will feed us earthly nutrients,  
They will let us recover... fly away.

*(The GIRL ANGEL heaves out of the tub, falling on the floor. MR. and MRS X.E. dart into the room to see what has happened. MR. X.E. goes to the GIRL ANGEL and lifts her back into the tub.)*

**MRS. X.E.**

They'll get away.

**MR. X.E.**

*(holding the GIRL ANGEL, patting down her hair)*  
Shhhhhh...  
Settle yourself.  
This is your haven.

**MRS. X.E.**

*(revealing a pair of garden shears)*  
Prune them!

## 7. What I'd Do For You

**MR. X.E.**

I'd chisel away at the mountains,  
For you, my dear.  
I'd burrow all the way to hell,  
For you, my dear.

**MRS. X.E.**

Prune them!

**MR. X.E.**

I'd cut my face,  
Slicing horizontal stripes into my cheeks,  
For you, my dear.

If it amused you,  
My dear.

**MRS. X.E.**

Prune them!

**MR. X.E.**

I would, my dear.  
If it made you smile –  
Even a smirk.

*(MRS. X.E. violently slides the shears to MR. X.E. The angels are completely defeathered.)*

## SCENE III

*(MRS. X.E. sits in front of a mirror doing her hair, carefully placing three of the angels' feathers in her updo, smiling.)*

## 8. Smiles

**MRS. X.E.**

I know how Mary must have felt,  
The Virgin one,

At the Annunciation.

A blessing!

“Hail, thou that art highly favored!”

It's enough to send me back to church!

Enough to make me pray in thanks!

Enough to make me smile,

For the first time in six months!

We have struggled:

Bounced checks,

Missed payments,

A week without power.

Life's sacrifices...

Rewarded.

If the authorities find out,

They will ship them off:

They will become subjects of science or faith.

Our blessing will be a distant memory.

*(to Mr. X.E.)*

Do you see me?

Do you see me smile?

I've never been so happy.

Let us reap the smiles of good neighbors!

Let us reap their magic, their beauty.

Oh, how these feathers glisten...

Glisten like diamonds.

## 9. Feathers are Prickly Things

### **CHORUS**

Feathers are prickly things

In the wrong hands.

The softness turns sharp

With greed.

Naked beasts are those

Clipped flightless.

Feathers, a shared currency

Of Heaven and Hell.

Feathers are prickly things

In the wrong hands.

The softness turns sharp

With greed.

Feathers are prickly things,

Feathers, of Heaven and Hell.

### **SCENE IV**

*(MRS. X.E. attends a charity function. She is surrounded by wealthy women in gorgeous gowns.)*

## 10. I've Been Blessed

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**MRS. X.E.**

*(being over-dramatic)*

I've been blessed,  
Ladies, I've been blessed.  
Can you tell by the way I'm glowing?  
Oh, I must temper my excitement,  
But my husband found these feathers  
At the foot of our bed,  
These feathers,  
Oh, these feathers,  
That poke out of my head,  
From the wings of two gorgeous angels!

I've been blessed!  
Ladies, I've been blessed.  
Can you see by the way I'm giggling  
Like a teenaged girl?

The angels with feathers,  
Crawled into our clawfoot,  
Nested in linens!

They woke up so sweetly,  
*(She begins to tear up.)*  
And we held them,

Like babies.  
Oh, I've been blessed.  
Oh, we've been blessed.  
You all should be blessed.  
Wait until you feel their  
Little hands upon your breasts.

We all deserve their blessings.  
Take my number!  
I have been blessed.

Take my number!  
Donations are accepted  
In the form of cash or check.  
A spiritual meeting,  
With our full discretion.

Take my number...

**MAN**

*(to MRS. X.E., shaking with excitement.)*  
Please, let me be blessed.  
I must be blessed.

**MRS. X.E.**

Fully and completely.

## SCENE V

*(In the clawfoot tub.)*

### 11. We Will Fly Away

#### **BOY ANGEL**

And by some strange feat of coincidence,  
We've fallen into an Eden,  
A clawfoot Eden,  
Where we wash away the  
blood, the dirt, the salt,  
Haven't shed tears in years,  
Now our eyes crust over,  
Our ribs are broken, our teeth are chipped,  
Our feathers raw, our arteries emptied.

I am a wound,  
Gaping, gushing;  
My heart beats...  
Faster, faster, faster.  
What once was an angel  
Will soon be a shriveled sack.

*(to the GIRL ANGEL, holding her)*

A thorn bush  
Has cut you up,  
Marked you from head to heel.  
I will nurse you,  
Embrace you back to health.  
And with feathers full,  
Glistening iceberg white...  
We will fly away.

#### **BOY ANGEL AND GIRL ANGEL**

We will rest here,  
And when we're better,  
Well-feathered,  
Lungs cleared,  
Hearts beating a moderate rhythm...  
We will fly away.  
We will fly,  
Fluttering fast like a hummingbird,  
We will fly away.  
*(Upstairs, MRS. X.E. is taking orders  
on the phone, while MR. X.E. pre-  
pares the angels for their clients.)*

## 12. Taking Orders

**MRS. X.E.**

*(into the telephone)*

Anything!

They will bless anything.

Eager angels!

Imagine such heavenly gifts!

We book on the quarter-hour,

Donation is fixed,

Cash preferred,

Check accepted,

Jewels considered.

They will bless anything.

Anything.

Anything.

They're at your service.

**MR. X.E.**

*(to the angels)*

They will say they love you  
for a sigh and a smile.

They will say they love you  
with a tear and a prayer.

Their love is in their back pocket,  
Thus never trust those who will pay.

**MRS. X.E.**

Sell your Ferrari!

Mortgage your home!

I don't have time to con-  
vince you of the value.

You called me!

Donation is fixed!

Taking orders!

**MR. X.E.**

They will say they love you for a sigh and  
a smile.

**MRS. X.E.**

Completely confidential.

No, no, no. Yes, yes.

Utterly private.

Remarkably tolerant.

Taking orders.

Donation is fixed.

## **SCENE VI**

*(There is a line-up of CUSTOMERS. A partition has been set up to give each of the angels a separate space. One by one they have their audience with either angel. A middle-aged man weeps at the feet of the GIRL ANGEL, while a woman undresses the BOY ANGEL and begins to sketch him on a small pad of paper. Another cycle of customers: a woman enters the room of the GIRL ANGEL and places articles for her to bless in a row on the floor, while a man embraces the BOY ANGEL from behind.)*

### **13. The Blessings**

#### **BOY ANGEL AND GIRL ANGEL & SOLOIST**

Always asleep,  
Always awake,  
Always singing,  
Always infinite.

#### **FEMALE CUSTOMER**

Where have you been?  
Didn't you hear me?

#### **BOY ANGEL AND GIRL ANGEL**

Always sunrise.

#### **SOLOIST**

Always miniature.  
Always sunrise.

#### **FEMALE CUSTOMER**

Where have you been?

#### **BOY ANGEL**

Always harvest.

#### **SOLOIST**

Always harvest.

#### **FEMALE CUSTOMER**

Where have you been?  
I've been waiting for you.  
I have called,  
But you don't answer.  
*(SHE chokes the BOY ANGEL.)*

I have cried,  
But you don't comfort me.  
Where have you been?

*(SHE kicks HIM in the stomach.)*

#### 14. Ignition

*(After the woman has finished, MRS. X.E. enters the room of the BOY ANGEL, holding him. At first this seems like a comforting gesture, but then she begins to force herself on him, encouraging HIS hands to explore HER breasts. SHE kisses him gently at first, then becomes aggressive. Meanwhile a man forces the GIRL ANGEL to smoke methamphetamines.)*

*(MRS. X.E. takes an axe to the "FOR SALE" sign. The GIRL ANGEL jerks the john off to completion.)*

#### 15. Brick J.

##### **GIRL ANGEL**

Brick J. likes it rough;  
Grabs the skeleton  
Of my empty wings.  
Breaks off a piece,  
Laps at the marrow.  
Clutches the scrap  
Slurping in circles:  
A sexual act.  
Brick J. can't get enough;  
Mounts me, holding me  
By my empty wings.  
Sucks every drop  
Of my inner-most marrow.  
Moans as he rolls  
My tissue on his tongue:  
A carnivorous act.  
He can't get enough.  
He likes it rough.  
He can't get enough.  
He likes it rough.

I'm wailing.  
He's devouring.  
I'm wailing.

He's devouring.  
I'm wailing.  
He's devouring...

He drops the cleaned-out bone, spent.  
I whimper back to the house  
Hoping Mister X.E. has an  
extra-strong adhesive  
To put me back together.  
I scavenge the hallway closet –

Rust removers,  
Feather dusters,  
Bleaches,  
Peach-scented dish soap, dish soap, no...  
The nub of bone sits on the counter  
'Til the hardware store opens at 8am  
It takes four applications  
To mend me.  
To mend me.  
    He likes it rough.  
    He makes it rough.  
    He likes it rough.

Mister X. E. rewards me with three feathers,  
Three feathers and a night off.  
I spend my night listening through the walls

As the house  
Readies for the night's work,  
I pray for the stomping of horse's feet  
And Gabriel's voice  
Trumpeting the world's judgment.

I'm wailing.  
He's devouring.  
I'm wailing.  
He's devouring...

## 16. Fully Devoured

## 17. Battered, Bruised, Beaten, Bloody

### *CHORUS*

Battered, bruised, beaten, bloody.  
A sack of bones draped  
Over last summer's produce.  
Battered, bruised, beaten, bloody.  
Battered, bruised, beaten, bloody.

Heaven is a flurry,  
Pure and blinding.  
A whiteout of memories:  
A constant fluttering.

Here is exhaustion.  
Battered, bruised, beaten, bloody.  
Battered, bruised, beaten, bloody.

## **SCENE VII**

*(Upstairs, MR. X.E. tries to kiss his sleeping wife. SHE pushes him away.)*

### **18. The Taste of Your Kisses**

**MRS. X.E.**

I hate the taste of your kisses.  
Brush your teeth and sleep on the sofa.

**MR. X.E.**

Do you love me?

**MRS. X.E.**

Not tonight, but maybe tomorrow.

**MR. X.E.**

Will you love me tomorrow?

**MRS. X.E.**

Impossible to say...

**MR. X.E.**

You will never be legendary.

**MRS. X.E.**

I already am.

**MR. X.E.**

You will never be legendary.

**MRS. X.E.**

I already am.

**MR. X.E.**

Never be legendary.

**MRS. X.E.**

I am pregnant with his child.  
A little cherub flutters in my womb.  
The legend is growing.

*(MRS. X.E. physically kicks MR. X.E. out of the bed. HE finally seems to understand the extent of his wife's hatred towards him. HE leaves the bedroom.)*

## 19. Empty Arteries

### **BOY ANGEL**

I am a wound,  
Gaping, gushing.

### **BOY ANGEL AND GIRL ANGEL**

We will never be  
Well-feathered,  
Healed of wounds,  
Lungs cleared,  
Hearts beating a moderate rhythm...  
We must run away.

### **GIRL ANGEL**

But he loves me.

### **MRS. X.E.**

I don't want to lose him.  
I can't lose the boy.  
I can't lose him.  
I don't want to lose the boy...

*(MR. X.E. stands at the door of the  
cellar, holding a bag of feathers.)*

## 20. A Bag of Feathers

### 21. Mercy

#### **MR. X.E.**

Have mercy on yourselves.  
Restore your wings and fly away.  
Have mercy on yourselves!  
Remove your shackles  
And fly away.

*(MR. X.E. dumps the feathers out of the bag.)*

Hundreds of feathers,  
Here is your salvation!  
Have mercy on yourselves.  
Fly in the blackness of night.  
Fly in the blackness to heaven.  
    Hundreds of feathers from your plumage.  
    Hundreds of feathers to build with...  
    A bouquet of feathers.  
Fly away!  
Have mercy on yourselves,  
Before the sleeping monster needs to feed.  
Greed begets greed.  
Here is your salvation.

*(HE tries to get the angels to rebuild their feathers, but they don't understand.)*

Feathers are your salvation!  
Restore your wings and fly away!

*(HE takes a feather and stabs it into his shoulder. HE stabs himself over and over again with feathers, hoping to inspire them.)*

#### **MR. X.E. AND CHORUS**

Have mercy on yourselves.  
Have mercy on me.  
May my new wings glisten,  
Then crumble in her hands.

#### **MR. X.E.**

Have mercy on me!  
Mercy.  
Mercy.  
Mercy.  
Have mercy on yourselves!  
Mercy.  
Mercy.  
Mercy.  
Have mercy on me!  
Have mercy on -

#### **MR. X.E. AND CHORUS**

Mercy.  
Mercy.  
Mercy.

*(HE stabs himself in the heart and dies on the floor. The angels attempt to flee, running up the stairs and into the night, but are caught before they can exit by MRS. X.E., smoking a cigarette in the dark, obstructing the door.)*

#### **22. Promises**

#### **MRS. X.E.**

Promise me.  
Promise that I'll be forgiven.  
When we reunite,  
In some distant spiritual plane.  
Promise me.  
Promise that my human sins  
Will be forgotten:  
That we will eat dinner together,  
That we will be a family,  
That you will love our child.  
Promise me  
That you will not think me evil.

Promise that you'll pity me.

Is this how Mary must have felt,  
The Virgin one,  
At the Annunciation?  
A blessing!  
"Hail, thou that art highly favored!"

Promise you'll take care of me.  
Promise me that.  
Promise.  
Promise me that.  
Promise.

*(MRS. X.E. opens the door a crack, giving  
the angels a means to exit. SHE then notices  
MR. X.E. in a pool of his own blood.)*

### **23. Gestation**

#### ***MRS. X.E.***

Even freshly sprouted,  
Your feathers look filthy, ugly.  
You plucked these feathers from their wings.  
You pruned them  
Like wild, savage branches.

They seduced you to death.  
Men will always be the weaker sex.

#### ***CHORUS***

Feathers are prickly things  
In the wrong hands.

#### ***MRS. X.E.***

You plucked these feathers from their wings.  
They seduced you.  
A tabloid story will reveal next week  
The man who forced his wife to pimp  
Innocent creatures.  
I will cry to the papers,  
To the morning shows,  
On the radio.  
My story, a television spectacle:  
"The unbelievable true story  
of the woman, forced into prostitution.  
Forced to sell the spiritual,  
The sexual,  
By a deranged spouse."

## SCENE VIII

### 24. Legendary on TV

#### **CHORUS**

Feathers are prickly things  
In the wrong hands.  
The softness turns sharp  
With greed.

*(MRS. X.E. is on a television talk show, noticeably pregnant.)*

#### **MRS. X.E.**

I never asked to be legendary.  
Infamy comes at a great price.  
I lost my husband,  
My life shattered,  
But I will rebuild.

I never asked to be legendary.  
I was helpless, a victim.  
He made me take the male as lover.  
He watched and laughed.  
I'm embarrassed.

I truly hope that they have found peace.

That the angels,  
That they have found their way back...

#### **TV HOST**

Will you ever recover?

#### **MRS. X.E.**

No. I can't imagine I will.  
I never asked to be legendary.  
Fame is a prickly thing.  
I never asked.  
But this child brings so many blessings,  
And for those I will smile.  
I will smile.  
Soon, I will smile again...

#### **CHORUS**

Battered, bruised, beaten, bloody.  
Battered, bruised, beaten, bloody.

#### **MRS. X.E.**

I never asked to be legendary.

*(The end.)*

