

Washed by Fire

Collaboratively conceived with choreographer Benjamin Levy, the inspiration for *Washed by Fire* came from the desire to explore issues of cultural and personal identity. We attempted to explore parallels in our family histories based upon flight from repressive governments and cultures. Levy's parents are Persian Jews who escaped Iran during the Islamic Revolution in the 1970s. My father is Indian but was raised in South Africa, from which he emigrated in the late 1960s to escape Apartheid. My maternal grandfather was a Jew who escaped Russia during the Russian Revolution. This proved to be an impossibly difficult conceptual starting point, which we had to circumvent in order to begin creating. We proposed creating materials, both musical and gestural, which we were attracted to in some instinctual way, but would ordinarily be ashamed of because of their simplicity and wouldn't want other people to hear or see. I took this idea to heart. By embracing musical references that my mind often avoids, I was able to reconnect with rhythm, melody, and mode in a way that is markedly different from my other recent music. I created a piece that resonated with me on a fundamental level, one in which my emotions are not filtered by abstraction, where the focus is on a visceral connection with time. The piece attempts to be honest about the difficulty of understanding how identity is constructed, but at the same time acknowledges that connections to a cultural and familial past shape means of expression.

Washed By Fire was commissioned by LEVYdance. Portions of it were composed at Civitella Ranieri.

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