

Hum II (2023)

Multichannel Sound Installation, 30 min. 51 sec.

Hajra Waheed's major new commission for Sharjah Biennial 15, is considered her most ambitious work to date. *Hum II (2023)* expands on Waheed's continued interests in and firm commitment towards reimagining our future as a borderless space, where the divisions of the modern nation state and resulting inequality cease to exist; one that puts our shared humanity first and requires us to be radically interconnected as species.

For Waheed, the arts play a critical role in movements to dismantle borders and for reimagining the world by building new lexicons within the context of these struggles. Expanding on her critically acclaimed work *Hum (2020)*, this second volume, housed within a uniquely built conical sound chamber, continues to explore humming and other vocal practices as a means to consider radical forms of collective and sonic agency. Legible yet insidious, irrefutable and infectious, these forms hold the emancipatory potential to cut across a crisis of hardened differences, to challenge border constructions and transform ethnic, religious, linguistic and national affiliations into larger calls for solidarity.

Hum II (2023) for Sharjah Biennial 15, specifically reflects on women's leadership in the struggles of working people, the marginalized and the dispossessed and how their participation is rarely made visible, let alone amplified or centered. Consisting entirely of voice, the composition features seven songs that have been central to popular uprisings, mass social movements and anti-colonial struggles across the Americas, Africa and Asia where women have been at the forefront. Many of these songs and musical forms have either been suppressed or banned, all of them are sung widely today, preserved and passed down by women to a new generation of youth.

Into the New World - Girls Generation

Nearly nine years after its initial release, *Into the New World* by K-Pop girl-group Girls' Generation (a.k.a SNSD) took on a life of its own in 2016, when +300 students were confronted by over 1600 riot police while gathering in solidarity at Ewha Women's University (Seoul). Upset at the way the administration made changes to requirements and programs, the young women peacefully assembled, demanding they be heard. Just before riot police violently dismantled their stand-in, students spontaneously began singing. Captured briefly on video before going viral, *Into the New World* would go on to become the unofficial anthem for South Korea's Candlelight Revolution and this moment remembered as the opening chapter in a political saga that later ousted President Park Geun-hye. The Candlelight Revolution cumulatively rallied together 16 million people—almost a third of the country's population over a series of 20 Saturday night vigils. President Park would be impeached and later sentenced to 24 years of prison for abuse of power and charges of bribery and coercion. *Into the New World* has since been sung in protests throughout Asia, including the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong in 2019 and in Thailand in 2020.

Girls' Generation/SNSD is the longest standing girl-group in K-Pop. A growing phenomenon and movement in Southeast Asia, K-Pop activism has become an alternative means of political mobilization owed to K-Pop fan culture and its long history of highly coordinated global community networks and digital organizing. More recently, members of this community have been able to use K-Pop and its networks as a way to take actions that support social movements.

Tarweedeh Shmaali & Ya Taali'een 'ala el-Jabal - Palestinian Folk Songs

Tarweedeh, is an encrypted style of Palestinian folk song developed by women to send coded messages to their men in prison - brothers, uncles, sons, fathers, husbands and lovers. The form is said to have emerged in the period of forced conscription during the Ottoman era and was then used during the ensuing periods of British and then Israeli occupation. Palestinian women would sing *tarweedeh* as they walked the outer perimeter of the prison walls, beneath the outdoor facing windows of the cells where their men were held. Appearing to recite traditional folk songs, the lyrics were coded with secret information to help their loved ones escape. The women would conceal the information by using a technique called *Imlolaah*, which involves adding the letter "l" ("lam" in Arabic) repeatedly to make the song sound like gibberish. Referenced in *Hum II* (2023) are two examples that use *Imlolaah*: *Tarweedeh Shmaali* (*Northern Song or Lover's Hymn*) and *Ya Taali'een 'ala el-Jabal* (*Oh you, climbing up the mountain*).

Gaza remains the world's largest de facto open air prison and there are over 4,400 Palestinian political prisoners currently held in Israeli jails. While *tarweedeh* cannot be used by Palestinian women to communicate to their loved ones in today's prisons, the songs are being resurrected as songs of resistance, passed down and between women. They were sung on the streets of Palestine during the uprisings against the Israeli occupation in April, May and June 2021 and *Tarweedeh Shmaali* was shared widely to honor the six Palestinian political prisoners who made a rare escape from an Israeli maximum-security prison in Gilboa in September, 2021.

Baraye - Shervin Hajipour

On September 28, 2022, Iranian singer Shervin Hajipour released the song *Baraye* on his Instagram account, two weeks into the largest wave of anti-government protests in the country since the inception of the Islamic Republic in 1979. The protests erupted after Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish woman, was arrested and brutally beaten by Iran's morality police for allegedly wearing her head scarf in a manner that violated the country's hijab law. She later died while in police custody. *Baraye* is composed entirely of lyrics that Hajipour crowdsourced from social media posts by fellow Iranians describing their reasons for joining the protests such as: "for our sisters, mine and yours"; "for a change in the minds of the fanatics"; "for the school kids, for the future"; "for this polluted air"; "for the girl who wished she was a boy"; "for this list that goes on and on". The song instantly went viral, amassing 40 million views within 24 hours. Hajipour was arrested two days later and forced to remove the song from his account, but by then *Baraye* was being played across Iran and in solidarity worldwide: blasted from cars, sung by passersby in the streets, shouted from rooftops, chanted at schools and offices, and streamed across social media.

Unlike past protest movements against Iran's authoritarian clerical rulers, these demonstrations are led by young women with a complex and multi-faceted critique of dictatorship. During the first 100 days of nationwide protests, over 14,000 people were arrested and over 400 protestors are reported to have been killed by government forces. Thousands of detainees are, as of January 1, 2023, at risk of torture, sexual assault and other mistreatments, especially women, LGBTQ+ people and ethnic and religious minorities. Over 100 detainees face charges punishable by death, including at least 11 who have already been sentenced to execution. In early December 2022, the government began with the executions of two young men in connection with the protests after holding secret trials, 23-year-old Mohsen Shekari and 23-year-old Majidreza Rahnavard.

Un Violador en Tu Camino - Las Tesis

On November 20, 2019, a group of women from the feminist art collective *Las Tesis* staged a street performance in Valparaiso, Chile amid a brutal repression of anti-austerity protests that had been taking place for weeks across the country. Standing side by side, wearing blindfolds, the women began a powerful protest chant and dance routine, synchronized to the beat of a drum. The title of the performance, *Un Violador en Tu Camino* (*The Rapist In Your Path/Is You*), ironically references an old slogan portraying the police as "the friend in your path" and the lyrics call out the state for facilitating and condoning the use of sexual and other violence against the protestors. "The rapist is you. It's the cops, the judges, the state, the President. The oppressive state is a rapist. The rapist was you. The rapist is you."

The performance was staged five days later in Santiago during a gathering to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Videos of this performance went viral and women began staging performances in over 400 locations in over 50 countries, with *Las Tesis* encouraging women to adapt the performance to their own contexts. In Chile, *Un Violador en Tu Camino* was performed in cities, towns and neighborhoods across the country by women of all ages during the anti-austerity protests of 2019-2020. The performance helped to center the feminist movement within the protest and its popular assemblies, and within the subsequent process to rewrite the national constitution that the protests achieved. On March 8, 2020, International Women's Day, nearly two million women marched in Chilean cities as part of a two day General Feminist Strike, with groups of women performing *Un Violador en Tu Camino* throughout the country.

Untitled Katajjaq Song - Beatrice Deer & Sylvia Cloutier

Inuit throat singing (*katajjaq* in Inuktitut) is a guttural form of chanting or musical performance, that uses rhythmic inhalations and exhalations of breathing and reverberations in the throat to produce multiple notes simultaneously. Unlike traditions of overtone-singing in other parts of the world, *katajjaq* is practiced and passed down between women, who developed it as a way to entertain themselves and their children during long winter nights when the men were away hunting. It is performed typically as a playful duet, in which two women face each other and exchange sounds and knowledges of the natural world, with one leading and the other repeating until one of them is unable to maintain the rhythm, tempo, or breathing pattern. *Katajjaq* can also be performed in communal gatherings of more than two women; used to tell stories and as lullabies to soothe babies, who were tucked close enough into the hoods of parkas to feel the vibration of their mother's throat.

Katajjaq was nearly lost due to a sustained programme of cultural genocide pursued by the Canadian government and Christian missionaries after their arrival to Arctic communities in the late 19th century. Indigenous women are killed at nearly seven times the rate of non-Indigenous women in Canada. The rate of violence experienced by Inuit women, at 14 times the national average, is higher than that experienced by any other group of women in the country. Since the mid - 1980's, throat singing has seen a resurgence, with elders passing down this form to a younger generation of Inuit women and girls who have returned to this long oral tradition and are exploring new ways of its expression. For these women, *katajjaq* is not only a powerful musical form, but an act of love, healing, decolonization and resistance.

Beatrice Deer and Sylvia Cloutier are performers from Nunavik.

Baal Bhimacha Palana - Dalit Women's Song, Maharashtra

Bhim Palana, or *Bhim's cradle songs*, are anti-caste songs composed, sung and passed down by Dalit women to their children. "Bhim" refers to Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, the venerated leader of India's anti-caste movement from the 1920s - 1950s. He established numerous social and political organizations, founded newspapers and political parties, organized movements of peasants and agricultural laborers, chaired the drafting of India's constitution as its first Minister of Law, and led a mass conversion of his followers to Buddhism. Ambedkar, who was himself a Dalit (previously known as "untouchable"), sought to demolish the tyrannies of Hinduism's caste system so as to rebuild a new social order based on the equality of all. He believed that this annihilation of caste could only proceed through the emancipation of women, particularly Dalit women.

In a context of extremely low literacy, songs were used by Dalits as the main vehicle through which to transmit and popularize Ambedkar's teachings and to mobilize the anti-caste movement. While Dalit men produced songs based on a form of musical performance from Maharashtra known as *Jalsa* or *Shahiri*, Dalit women created a new genre of lullabies called *Bhim Palana* to educate and inspire the next generations. Today, Dalit women musicians, such as Shital Sathe, are bravely revitalizing this tradition of *Ambedkari Jalsas* and *Bhim Palanas* to bolster the anti-caste movement and denounce the new manifestations of caste emanating from the country's neo-liberal regime and the rise of Hindutva facism. Their songs and the struggle to annihilate caste remain as critical as ever, with Dalit women still facing widespread discrimination, rampant sexual violence, and a severe lack of access to justice, education, health and other services.

Credits

Artistic Director: Hajra Waheed

Technical Director of Music & Mixing Engineer: Pietro Amato

Musical Arrangement: Laurel Sprengelmeyer

Sound Engineer: Michael Feuerstack

Architectural Advisor: David Adjaye

Project Manager: Tiffany Lê

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