

# PROGRAM NOTES

## BODYSPEAKING

*The American poet, Robert Frost, is known for contributing poetry that enriched the culture and philosophy of the United States. Amidst his literary expression and achievements, Frost's life was ridden with grief. Of his six children, only two outlived Frost. It is said that Frost's dedication to his creative work and depressive nature often left the family without the means necessary to provide sufficient food. Years after Frost's death, and the publication of more than twelve thousand written items, a single poem from his dying daughter was discovered.*

### From Robert Frost's Daughter

Dreams are squished when mouths sit and scream for meals, Pop.  
Mother milked us long after breasts sat parched up:  
Starvation is fast in a house fed verses.  
Ghosts do not crave meat.

Pray that heaven tolerates sins like yours because neglect is branched atop sprouting birches.  
Squeeze my corpse and breathe in the sound my voice had-  
*Father, I'm hungry.*

*Sarah was infertile and married her half-brother Abraham. Sarah offered Abraham an Egyptian slave named Hagar as a substitute body. He wedded the slave and they conceived a child. Thirteen years later God answered Sarah's prayers and granted her a son by Abraham to be named Isaac. She was 90 years old, and known for her outstanding beauty.*

### From Sarah to Her Husband, Abraham

You adulterous-unappreciative-half-brother of mine.  
You apocryphal-effeminate-fiend-harem-having-husband.  
How dare you.  
God has been bridling me like a horse with a bit.  
Holding me back so my chagrin won't poison you, stab you, take my two good hands and throttle you in the night;  
loose a rattlesnake under your sheets,  
tuck a razor into my tongue before you kiss me.

I've done everything you asked for: said no to rubies, the Pharaoh's love-- my chance at a life without calloused feet.  
I gave you a slave woman, even wiped the dirt from her face.  
Bore your son from this cold, moist-less body from the spreading of my legs, like the tip of Mount Moriah came the Kings of men-- my womb is the mother of nations;  
long after the dripping blood trickling like a river down my body ran dry,  
I milked these sagging breasts:  
into the child made from God erupting the body you devoured.  
My slave says still  
I have beauty  
I never wanted  
anything but you.

When our son was of age  
God tested you and said sacrifice him.

**CHOREOGRAPHY:** Jessie Jeanne Stinnett & the dancers **Poetry:** Sarah Anne Stinnett  
*Giving voice to the silenced + to what lies within. A performance project by two sisters.*

Then angels came and saved you both  
but what about your wife?  
I was your wife.  
Couldn't you have said no?  
Couldn't you see that she was temptation?  
I was asking for faith in these barren forsaken bones when you  
folded yourself into the prayer of her body.  
My body is not absolution for your piety to seed.  
She was the sin you were supposed to deny.

My body is a forest you poached.  
My body is the salt you left behind.  
My body is a prayer you whispered into a Godless night.  
My body is a constellation you turned your back on.  
My body would rather  
shrink into flakes of encrusted yellow bile  
than forgive the endlessness of you, husband, I will never  
again be a conduit for your mystical musings. So tonight,

while we are lying in bed  
I will offer myself to you one last time  
because the lips of my vagina are a bear trap.

*Many years after Muhammad's death, his favorite wife, A'isha disclosed the intimacy of his sensual relationship with her. A'isha was commonly accepted as the ideal sexual woman with wit and intelligence, as well as Muhammad's closest companion. Upon her death, relatives discovered Muhammad's diaries revealing his secret celibacy during their marriage. Muhammad never made love to A'isha, because of his hidden celibacy, and commitment to God. Here is an excerpt of Muhammad's first letter to A'isha. She was 9 years old (Spellberg, 31).*

### Dear A'isha

My palms upturned like the onset of worship  
touch your pale, pearly hands  
coupled in mine like this  
I was made  
to pray.  
My predicament is changeless.  
I was not made for spreading thighs  
into caress  
into children  
but I love you,  
and that is all I can offer.

All my life I have waited  
for your birth and your bloom.  
You are cocooned in my body  
Like the deep chasm of matter embedded in you  
lustful for me to awaken it. I dreamt

our first time was outside  
your back pressed into the ground  
I wanted you  
to face the sky.  
Your smooth woman skin white as daisy petals  
reflecting the moon  
you arched your body

*your breasts rising with the sun you were  
unfolding yourself like the surrender of yes--  
God said come  
and the quaking of your bones waned,  
your womb, caving into itself*

but this was just a dream, so, A'isha,

although my heart is standing proud,  
erect with chaste courage  
I must abstain from caressing you  
because my God in his cruelty  
begot my body to live long and lonely.

My seed  
would fill your belly with sin.  
Fettered in reverence,  
the echoes of your  
sweet, lilac scent ricochet in the  
tomb of my body because there is no place  
to scream for the silenced.  
I am water.  
You are clay.  
My body would wash away  
the magnificence of your matter.

If you choose to be mine  
I will not sully your purity.  
We could learn to love without hands:  
our bond growing together like humoral  
harmony,  
we could kiss like flowers blooming  
without touch  
I was made  
for prayer.

So, my love,  
consider my offer carefully.  
I can give you the heavens  
because I was born from it.  
If you say yes, my heart will be a soaring bird.  
If you say yes, I will bury  
my days of physical ecstasy  
and forget why I was born a man.



Fee support for Jessie Jeanne & Dancers may be available to nonprofit organizations through the New England States Touring (NEST) program of the New England Foundation for the Arts. Visit [www.nefa.org](http://www.nefa.org) for more