

## **6 Variations on a Single Flutter**

A dance theatre play

by Naïma Kristel Phillips

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Note: *6 Variations on a Single Flutter* is dance theatre piece. It is understood that this play will be developed through physical, vocal and image-based explorations. Stage directions are therefore as integral to the experience as the spoken text. Also, while the gender for each role is defined in the script, some are interchangeable.

### At rise

A homeless man sleeps on a park bench  
In between scenes, cosmic time shifts mess with the characters' sense of time and identity.

### Prelude

In a world with different manifestations of time...

Time is a flock of nightingales: A scientist frenziedly scribbles notes on a black wall. It looks like Basquiat's drawings.

Time is a quality/suspended: An artist laughs as she watches the scientist. She's falling in love.

Flow of water: A pregnant woman walks towards her husband.

Time is a sense: A homeless man sleeps on a park bench. He is an engineer who has lost his sense of time. All other characters are affected by his "time-space curvature."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "In general relativity, it is assumed that spacetime is curved by the presence of matter (energy)..." (taken from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spacetime>)

## Suite 1: Single Atom

Artist makes a sound collage, in the form of a remix of Fela Kuti's Confusion track 1 and 3 and a radio interview with His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

*This is an Ashanti proverb.<sup>2</sup>*

Fela Kuti

*Scientists have a special responsibility  
a special*

Dalai Lama

*It is because of the beauty*

Fela Kuti

*a moral responsibility  
a moral responsibility  
a moral responsibility*

Dalai Lama

*fe fe naa efe inti na*

Fela Kuti  
(*in Ashanti*)

*the interests  
the interests  
serves the interests of humanity  
in the best possible way*

Dalai Lama

*o ba tu le ka  
O so ne nu fu na yese  
Ebeti a to nti*

Fela Kuti  
(*in Ashanti*)

*the Power*

Dalai Lama

*the power to affect  
to affect the lives of all of us.*

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<sup>2</sup> *Fe Fe Naa Efe, Confusion*, Fela Anikulap Kuti (EMI Music Publishing France, Track 3)

Fela Kuti

*It is because of the beauty  
That is why a woman  
Holds her breasts when she runs  
Not because the breast is going to fall*

Dalai Lama

*It is true  
however  
that this trust  
is no longer*

*an absolute  
faith.<sup>3</sup>*

End of sound collage. Artist consults her notes.

Artist

*Scientists  
have a special responsibility  
a moral responsibility in ensuring that  
science serves the interests of humanity  
in the best possible way.  
What they do in their specific disciplines has the  
Power the power the power...*

Scientist

*...to affect the lives of all of us.*

Artist

You read his book?

Scientist

A couple times.

*(He quotes the book.)*

*For whatever  
historical reasons  
scientists have come to enjoy a much higher level of public trust than other professionals.  
It is true  
however  
that this trust*

Scientist and Artist

*is*

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<sup>3</sup> *The Universe in a Single Atom*, His Holiness The Dalai Lama (Broadway Books, pp 207-208)

*no longer  
an absolute  
faith.*

Artist

*There have been too many  
tragedies  
related either directly or indirectly to science and technology*

Scientist

*for the trust in science to remain unconditional.*<sup>4</sup>

The Scientist and Artist stare at each other for a brief eternal moment.

Artist

So what got you hooked on the Dalai Lama?

Scientist

A colleague of mine was his guest at the first Mind and Life conference.

Artist

Wow.

Scientist

It's no big deal...

Artist

I think it is. *(Beat.)* Can I get you a drink?

Scientist

Thanks, but I have deadlines coming up. Maybe some other time...  
*(He's about to leave.)*

Artist

Sure.

*(To herself.)*

"If you understand the end well, the beginning won't trouble you."

Scientist

Sorry?

Artist

Oh nothing, I just remembered an Ashanti proverb.

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<sup>4</sup> *The Universe in a Single Atom*, His Holiness The Dalai Lama (Broadway Books, pp 207-208)

Scientist

You're into proverbs?

Artist

Yeah, I collect them. I mean, I don't... collect them. I'm not one of those creepy proverb collectors. I just uh...

Scientist

Creepy proverb collectors?

Artist

Well, people have hobbies of all sorts. I sure somewhere out there, you could find proverb collectors that go to conventions and wear tiny little proverb hats.

Science

Right... Anyway, you flipped it.

Artist

I'm sorry, I meant to say that I sample music. Now and then I like to mix in a proverb. I don't do it all the time... Wait, what did you say?

Scientist

You flipped it. The real saying is "If you understand the *beginning* well, the *end* won't trouble you."

Artist

Oh.

Scientist

So what's your favourite?

Artist

Good question... Maybe this one: "When a man sits with a pretty girl for an hour, it seems like a minute. But let him sit on a hot stove for a minute and it's longer than any hour."<sup>5</sup>

Scientist

That's not a proverb.

Artist

Yes it is! I'm pretty sure my grams taught it to me before she died.

Scientist

It's relativity. Einstein's famous explanation for the layman.

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<sup>5</sup> "On the Effects of External Sensory Input on Time Dilation." A. Einstein, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, N.J., Journal of Exothermic Science and Technology (JEST, Vol. 1, No. 9; 1938). Published in *Einstein's Hot Time*, Mirsky, Steve, Scientific American; Sep2002, Vol. 287 Issue 3, p102.

The layman... You a scientist?

Artist

Astrophysicist.

Scientist

A stargazer. I like that!

Artist

They stare at each other for a brief eternal moment.

I have to go. Appointment, you know. See you around...

Scientist

Scientist hurries back to his notes. Artist is left alone with her soundboard. Scientist frenziedly scribbles notes on a black wall.

## Suite 2: Solomon's Song

Woman tries on several dresses. None of them feel like they fit right. She finally chooses one and approaches the bench, singing Cassandra Wilson's "Solomon Sang, seducing her husband, the engineer. She will stop a few feet before reaching the bench, maybe three feet away. Engineer doesn't see her.

Engineer

I woke up one day and you weren't home. Something was off.

Woman

*He had silver and gold  
Riches untold  
And the beast of the field lay at his feet*

*Everybody bowed  
He wondered why or how  
It all came to be*

If this was a weekday, why wasn't I at the office? I checked the time on my phone. There were thirty