

Those Cats!, 2025

Written and Directed by Cha Yeonså

Part I *9 Lives* — Performance by Sunhee Bae.

Part II *Resurrected Mother* — Translated and Read by Nari Sohn.

Excerpted poems from 29 other poems including “Those Cats!” by Kim Eon Hee, and 9 poems including “Lady Lazarus” by Sylvia Plath.

Kim Eon Hee

1. Those Cats!
2. The Sixth Prayer
3. Buffering
4. Blue Confession
5. Knock, Knock, Knock
6. 피에타 시노레
7. 거품의 탄생1
8. 거품의 탄생2
9. Horangmalko
10. Sentences
11. 양순음
12. 음림
13. Chorus
14. 아주 특별한 꽃다발
15. The Flower Bouquet Has Yet To
16. 피치카토
17. At Birth
18. 시, 혹은
19. 랄랄랄 1
20. 랄랄랄 2
21. 사랑해
22. Here
23. 개양귀비
24. 그라시아스 2014
25. I Wrote Not a Single Line
26. 운구용 범퍼카
27. 입속의 길
28. Vaseline Symphony
29. 꿈의 전부

Sylvia Plath

1. Lady Lazarus
2. The Applicant
3. Daddy
4. Three Women
5. Morning Song
6. The Jailer
7. The Hanging Man
8. Medusa
9. The Moon and the Yew Tree

When a corpse rises, peeled like a cat, at this ticklish moment We cannot hold back a secret smile

‘In the circus’¹, existing even in heaven, as Aglaja Veteranyi said, ‘the women laughing’², as Hyosil Yang said, are reading poems. The heroines of horror films, who are a cat, a woman, a corpse, a boy-girl, a monster, a child or a mother — or here, the bodies reading poems — begin the technique of rolling their tongues over words that have been cut out and wedged together. It is a prayer and an acrobatic ritual they patch for themselves, ‘sent back’³ into the insult of a spinning world.

Sunhee Bae, the actor, spoke about ‘a God being peeled open’. One that crawls into a room in broad daylight, naked, and only crying or laughing like a child, a God who could do nothing except love. Part I *9 Lives* rolls through nine lives and deaths, borne by the nine-time repetition of “Those cats!” On a perfectly square blanket three meters wide, the arrayed “Festival” is corpses, circus bodies, and cats — a field of life in full bloom that becomes startlingly beautiful only with snakes slipping quietly through the grass⁴. The act of reciting, with the whole body, the split-open words in Kim Eon-hee’s poetry reaches a ‘state of the flower’⁵ unsettling and elegant to behold. A Venus Pudica juggling shame, a pre-sexual body, insect-like and sunrise-like, reclines in a frail sexuality. Those voyeuristic cats, those damp, ‘thin’ bodies wait with drool at their lips, curled like question marks.

Nari Sohn, the researcher, spoke of “fear of rotation.” In a former life, she had been a boy in Hiroshima, with his whole body burned by the atomic blast. The damage done to his vestibular organs left her nauseated by anything that turns. She stands before a revolving stage, three meters high, set upright like a pillar. Part II, *The Resurrected Mother*, rushes forward like a rattling, unfamiliar train bound for a complete reading of Lady Lazarus. In each carriage, loaded one by one, are mothers—smirking, and never simple. That mother humming inside a heavy brazen bull⁷, smiling through the hollow eye sockets of the ‘Bombed Mary’⁸; that sea-cat⁹ mother rinsed by tide; and that Lazarus mother, the only one left whole in body among the tongues cut from Sylvia Plath—hooded in blue dusk, her back lifting askew, returns to life.

Those Cats! is a ‘Cat-Kyōgen’¹⁰: baring a naked face, performing as ‘woman,’ wearing poetic phrasing as a mask. The words become severed heads¹¹, seizing the body that appears onstage and returning it, animal-wise¹². Bodies I narrowly steered past, dead without my knowing, then killed again without knowing—from road, from street, from seashore—come back, licking their broken claws clean. You, who open your mouth clean as a cat’s, let me kiss the poem, poem, poem, the blubbery rim—Marina’s, her navel pressed to “poetry as trauma, not representation,”¹³ soak there for a thousand years, and Mary’s, swollen from crying so much.¹⁴

- 1 “Is there really a circus in heaven?” Aglaya Veteranyi, *Why Is the Child Boiling in the Polenta?* (1999)
- 2 “Who might undo the law-symbolic language? Who resists humanization while being utterly unaware? Who crosses the world of adulthood without barely/narrowly losing the child-like senses as a non-human, post-human?” Hyosil Yang, “Woman Laughing, Child Looking, Larvae Intertwined”, energywhoisshe.com/en/Woman-Laughing-Child-Looking-Larvae-Intertwined.html, Translated by Sangmin Lee, 2023
- 3 DOOSAN Special Exhibition *sent in spun found*. (Co-curated by Hyejung Jang, Lumi Tan, Artists: Cha Yeonsa, Gi Huo, 2025)
- 4 “6월은 결코 완성되지 않는다. 풀숲을 설설 가는 뱀 없이는 소스라치게 아름다워지지 않는다.” Kim Eon Hee, “Horangmalko”, Horangmalko, Moonji Publishing, 2024
- 5 “In *Fūshikaden (Transmission of the Flower Through Forms)*, the classical acting treatise of the Japanese performing art *Nohgaku*, the state of ‘the flower’—presented as the secret, strategy, and causal principle of performance—is emphasized, along with ‘the beauty of decline,’ which is regarded as an even higher stage of artistic maturity.” (Reference: 能: *Noh*, edited by Kim Hak-hyun, Youlhwadang, 1991)
- 6 “But so thin, So weedy a race could not remain in dreams, Could not remain outlandish victims” Sylvia Plath, “The Thin People”, from “*The Eye-mirror-mote*”: *Sylvia Plath’s Poetics of “Thinness”* (Nari Sohn, PhD dissertation, 2009)
- 7 The “Brazen Bull,” also called “Phalaris’s Bull,” was a musical torture device devised in ancient Greece. A person would be locked inside the metal chamber and heated, their screams resonating through brass pipes to mimic a bull’s bellow. Some accounts claim Catholic martyrs died this way, though no physical evidence has ever been found.
- 8 Urakami Cathedral (浦上天主堂), “The Bombed Mary” (Reference: *The Holy Mother of Nagasaki*, A modern Noh play written by Tomio Tada, directed and performed by Kanji Shimizu, premiered in 2005)
- 9 I read a news report about a decayed cat carcass found in a mudflat. It had drowned after being trapped in a cage, and its body was swollen with seawater as the tide rose and fell.
- 10 Traditional Japanese performing art *Nohgaku* alternates *Noh* and *Kyōgen* on a nearly square, specialized stage. *Kyōgen* (狂言)—meaning disguised or mad speech, unreasonable words, or “nonsense”—differs from the solemn masked drama of *Noh* in that performers usually appear unmasked. Masks are used only when portraying an ugly woman, an old woman, or the spirits of gods, demons, and small creatures. (Reference: 狂言: *Kyogen*, edited by Kim Hak-hyun, Yeolhwadang, 1991.)
- 11 “Die Nō-Maske wird nicht als “Mittel” verwendet, das sein “wahres” Gesicht bedeckt, um ein anderes vorzutäuschen. (...) Vielmehr sind die Nō-Masken mit abgehackten Menschenköpfen vergleichbar, die stets versuchen, ihre verlorenen Körper zurückzugewinnen. Wenn ein Schauspieler eine Maske trägt, so wird sein Körper von der Maske besessen.” *Verwandlungen für die Übersetzung der stummen Sprache und die Erinnerung an die Tote - Eine Studie zu Die Kranichmaske, die bei Nacht strahlt von Yoko Tawada* (Choi, Euna, 2021)

12 “The characteristics of Noh masks also play an important role in this work, and it is striking that all the masks used here are animal masks. This suggests that, unlike in Mugen Noh, the ‘severed human head’ in Yoko Tawada’s work seeks to recover a body that is animal in nature.” *Verwandlungen für die Übersetzung der stummen Sprache und die Erinnerung an die Tote - Eine Studie zu Die Kranichmaske, die bei Nacht strahlt von Yoko Tawada* (Choi, Euna, 2021)

13 Hyosil Yang, “The Speech of the Undead, Poetry,” included in the commentary for Kim Eon-hee’s poetry collection *Horangmalko* (2024).

14 “일회용 젓가락으로 지그시 빌려보는, 이 상처의 모독의 시, 시, 시, 사물들.....” Kim Eon Hee, “허불허불한”, *Trunk*, Segyesa, 1995; *Trunk*, Munhakdongne, 2020

Sunhee Bae

Actor. I have devoted myself to taking every letter into my body, and to writing in ways that exceed the body. I have insect delusions, and I am in love with a cockroach I encountered through those delusions. I live with my cat, Chuseok and Poong. I wrote and performed *Time of re-play* (2018), *Plastic Bird* (2019), *Flight Skills: Tomie’s Liberation Ritual* for “2022 Comedy Camp: Power Game,” *A Little Lonely Monologue and Always Kind Songs* (2022), which received the Young Theater Award at the 59th Baeksang Arts Awards, and *Sewing a Hole in the Night* (2024). I continue to refine what I call “poetic acting design”, a practice that reflects the duality and ambiguity inherent in action.

Nari Sohn

Having owed my early survival to poets—Sylvia Plath among them—I found my way into the study of British and American poetry. I recently presented a paper, “Kae Tempest’s Hip-Hop Epic Experiment: The Mythic Spirituality of *Brand New Ancients*”, at the Modern British and American Poetry Society of Korea, and am currently completing the full version. My work also includes translations into Korean of works such as Edgar Allan Poe’s collected poems, and I teach English and American poetry. In recent years, I have navigated symptoms that make reading and writing difficult, and it often feels as though an unseen helper—my own benevolent house spirit—keeps my life moving forward. Chronic migraines led me to meditation, and thanks to that same quiet companion, I now lead a humanities-based healing course that weaves together poetry and contemplative practice. After performing in Cha Yeonsa’s *Mosquitolarava Juice* (2022), I am now returning to the poetry-reading stage in *Those Cats!* (2025).

Cha Yeonsa

Carrying poet Kim Eon Hee’s Mandarava-like smile as a talisman, I passed through the time spent in a closed room, reading forensic textbooks and cutting paper with dressmaking scissors. I am making the paper-cut drawing series “Festival” (2023–), living among the corpses and friends that gather around its odyssey. My dad, who colored Dak paper for his abstract paintings, has died. I return to the same home with my mom, who reads, teaches, and writes about English poetry. Ever since writing the script for “*Those Cats!*”, the sharply sweet scraps of cut dak paper stick to the soles of my feet like pieces of bubble gum. Since this spring, I’ve been inviting two performers and laughing in a deliciously eerie way. I created the performances *Juicy Mosquito* (2022), *Mosquitolarava Juice* (2022), *heol, heol, heol* (2024), and this year, *Those Cats!* (2025) and *Spring Night* (2025–2026) will be presented.