

## Music Both Sacred and Profane

*I am bound to walk among the wounded and the slain  
And when the storm comes crashing on the plain  
I will dance before the lightning to music sacred and profane  
—Stephen Schwartz*

Dissonant shadows and sunbeams sparring,  
*chiaroscuro* dancing in the sky.  
Staccato thunder cracks, my hair rising

to brush against the clouds. The wind screams, warm  
no more. Alone against the tempest, dripping  
tears and dreams, eyes narrowed, I face the storm.

A *forte* beat of phosphorescent rain  
lashes down, a *vivace* piece performed  
across my tense back and rolling wicked plains.

Dark seas cascade, waves of watery wind  
howl in a raucous timbre. Marked by Cain,  
I roam the earth, angry, forever pinned.

In each drop, illumination imbued  
reflects my sad face—stained by ancient sin—  
and copies crystal lightning, split and skewed.

Roiling trees snap all chords, tossed by the air;  
percussive bullets spit from onyx hued  
skies. Will God still hear my tainted prayers?

I forsake fear and dance before the damning  
dawn. Clouds churn and red light catches a rare  
smile: I face the spray, *mancando*, laughing.

ELYSE SCHULER-CRUZ

## This is What You Asked For

Gillam's ears still rang from the first RPG that took out the  
Glead humvee in the convoy, and from the second RPG that  
destroyed the rear vehicle. Sgt. Roper screamed for the grunts to  
pile out and seek cover. He grabbed Gillam's collar and chucked  
him out before the gate was even down. After scrambling  
through the door of the shop in front of him, Gillam found him-  
self alone. Not a single Iraqi was in the shop; maybe they knew.

Gillam peeked out of the doorway and saw some of the other  
grunts taking cover in an alley, peeking into the window of an-  
other shop and crouching behind chest-high walls. Rifles popped  
in an irregular rhythm. Gillam heard a zip, pop and fizz near his  
face followed by a spray of tiny stone bits. He ducked back into  
the shop and his rifle's charging handle.

This is it, he thought. This is what you asked for.

He poked his right side out of the doorway and sighted in on  
the men on the rooftop ahead of him. They wore no uniforms, no  
flak, no Kevlar. He could count them on his fingers and still have  
digits to spare. Three with AK-47s taking controlled shots at the  
Marines. One had slung his rifle across his back so he could fire  
an RPG-7. Gillam held his breath and squeezed his trigger. Three  
pops, and the rounds seemed to miss their intended targets. One  
of the men pointed his way and the other raised the RPG to his  
shoulder.

Gillam ducked back into the shop and dove behind the  
counter. He heard the RPG explode into the wall and doorway.  
Chunks of stone rammed into the counter, sending shards of wood  
flying. Bits of wood and rock pelted him. His flak and Kevlar hel-