FAIR ISLE – Opera Seria with Doggos

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PROJECT OVERVIEW
OH, THE *OF* IT ALL is a short ballet written as part of **THE MEMENTI MORI OF EDWARD GOREY**, a shuffle play inspired by the life and work of Edward St. John Gorey (1925-2000). There are thirteen vignettes, each of a different genre that Gorey loved: from opera and ballet to hand puppets and silent film.

Throughout the play, Gorey appears in various incarnations, each a nickname or pseudonym of Gorey's; in FAIR ISLE Gorey appears as "Ted." By casting nine actors as different versions of the artist, MEMENTI MORI explores the spectrum and fluidity of identity, artistry, and personhood, through a life. It is our intention that many different bodies play Gorey and other roles. While the casting breakdown below represents the reality of a biographical moment, actors of any gender expression, race, sexual orientation and age can be cast; any performer who can sing the vocal range of a character should be considered. The creators are also open to exploring creative ways to shift vocal ranges should producers have specific performers they wish to cast; such changes should be directed to the contact information above for discussion.

CHARACTERS

TED	50-year-old Ted Gorey	Tenor, or any singer with range of D#3 – A4
TOM	28-year-old Tom Fitzgerald	Bass-baritone, or any singer with range of either E2 – E4 or A2 – E4 (with 5 optional F#2+E2 notes)
PORTER	A Porter.	Mezzo-soprano or a singer with range of E#4 – D#5
TEDDOGGO	A Dog.	No vocals.
TOMDOGGO	Another dog.	No Vocals.

SCENE:
The extreme northwest Coast of Scotland. Isolated island(s) in the far distant water.
To one side, a sign with marquee letters: "OVE ONE ANOTH" and several letters spread across the ground as though they've fallen off.
On the distant island, two small Doggos: TEDDOGGO and TOMDOGGO, eventually.

BACKGROUND
August 28 – September 23, 1975 Ted Gorey and a friend named Tom took a monthlong trip to the Scottish Isles. They'd shared a close friendship, attending ballet together among other things, for 18 months. Ted has taken on a sort of mentorship role – he's 21 years older. He makes drawings for Tom and sending him notes with quotes – illustrated with matching dog-like critters wearing "T" sweaters.

Midway through the trip, heading out to the Outer Hebrides, Tom split, going back to England for a nurse. Ted went on, alone. Among other places, he saw the islands and the Loch Ness (but not the monster). The next year Gorey published *L'Heure Bleu* – featuring two dogs in "T" sweaters, the same creatures he'd drawn in letters to Tom.

TED and TOM enter. They wear identical (but different colored) fur coats. Underneath, they wear identical collegiate letter sweaters, with "T" emblazoned on the chest.

TED charges towards the cliff, looking out at the ocean with awe. TOM hangs back.

A PORTER hauls on luggage – color coded to the men – and loads it onto the dinghy.

TOM has considerably fewer bags.
Get it?

                    TED
Here we have reached the west coast,
Le Fin du Monde!
And there, in distance, is Fair Isle.
It could be ours!
Only ours.

                    TOM
Ted, and Tom.
Tom, and Ted.
Find a meal –

                    TED
Then a bed.

                    TOM
You're finishing my sentences again.

                    TED
You always have your body on the brain.

We have travelled many miles,
Watched ballet and played some chess,
Through the air and countryside,
To the sloped shores of Loch Ness.

                    TOM
We did not see the monster!

TED
No, we did not see the monster after all!
"But everything we come across is to the point."

TOM
Who was that?

TED
John Cage.

TOM
Lighten up.

TED
Act your age.

TOM
Look at us: Quite a pair.
Our patchéd sweaters,
Matching furs,
And we complete each other's hair.

TED
And here we are –
Le Fin du Monde.
With Nothing in front of us but Fair Isle.
You and I together on the Fair Isle.

TOM
It looks so small against the sea.

TED
But big enough for you and me.
The vastness of the ocean makes it small.
I'm certain it could stand up in a squall.

TED	TOM
It looks so small against the sea,	This ocean,
But it's big enough for two,	This thund'ring ocean…Ah yes this
Yes, big enough	Thund'ring, Thund'ring
For you and Me!	Thund'ring, Thund'ring Ocean!

TOM

What is this – some sort of word game?
(*He runs to the marquee sign and plays with the letters, trying different combinations.*)

TED (*aside*)

I am very much in love with It, indeed.
This third mind,
Combined
Of his and mine.

I want to journey with him out into the sea.
To our Fair Isle.
Set up a little cottage.
Maybe a little frottage.

Yet the human heart is an invisible
And dreadful being.
Tossed on the waves,
My heart runs, fleeing.

TOM (*at sign, confused*)

Well, I can't suss it.
It should say "Love One Another,"
But cuss it.
There's no "L."
Nothing to spell.

(*Two Dogs – TEDDOGGO and TOMDOGGO – appear out on the island*)

Oh, look – look, can you see?
Two little pups, like you and me.

TED

Listen, Tom.

TOM

I'm listening.
(*he isn't*)
What's wrong.

TED

Oh nothing.

TED
Just a thing I want to share with you.
                    (*aside*)
A Creature from the sea.

                              TOM
I should tell you something, too.
Porter – scram. Come back in three.

(*PORTER has loaded all of TED's bags, but none of TOM's.*)

                              PORTER
But the ship's about to sail!

                              TOM
We only need one moment.

                              TED (*aside*)
One moment: The universe.
The ocean in a drop!

                              TOM
Well let us make a clean breast of it.
Shall I go first?

                              TED
You could go first

                              TOM
You should go first.

                              TED
Let us say it together.

(*On the Island, the DOGGOs sniff each other warily.*)

                              TOM & TED
I think that I'm in love!

                              TED (aside)
Bunty! I can't believe it!

TOM
I've met a lovely nurse.

(*On the island, TOMDOGGO bites and attacks TEDDOGGO*.)

                            TED
A nurse?

                            TOM
I'm staying on the mainland for a while.
And you shall be the king of your Fair Isle.

                            TED (*aside*)
He met a lovely nurse?
I offered him my universe.

                            TOM
Fair Isle is only big enough for one.

                            TED
Yes, only one. Always one.

                            TOM
You have so many bags – there isn't room for both of us.
Not in this boat, not on the isle, not in this life.

                            TED
You say you've met a nurse?

                            TOM
A very pretty nurse.
And you?

                            TED
And Me?

                            TOM
You said you are in love!
With who?

TED
Dear me.

                              TOM
With whom are you in love?

                              TED
The Island.
My fairest island.
They say that no man is and island,
But a man may find his heart on Fair Isle.

I have so many many bags.
There just is not the room,
For two upon this Birlinn,
Fair Isle will surely swirl into the sea,
If you should make landfall with me.

                              TOM
Then it's done.

              (*They Shake hands.*)

Enjoy Fair Isle!

                              TED
Enjoy your nurse.
I hope she's fun.

(*TOM grabs his bags and exits.
On the Island, TOMDOGGO disappears.
TEDDOGGO rolls, recovers, howling at the sky*.

                              TED
He met a lovely nurse?
I offered him my universe.

(PORTER enters.)

                              PORTER
Just you, sir?

TED

          Only me.
          Only me.
          Yes, Only me.

                            PORTER

Enjoying Scotland, sir?

                              TED

          Such lovely storms,
          Such lovely storming waves,
          That rise like walls,
          Separating, separating.

                            PORTER

Did you make it to Loch Ness?

                              TED

          Aye, I did.
          I did not see the monster,
          No, I did not see the monster, after all.
          The greatest disappointment of all my life.

     (*He goes to the sign.*)

                              TED

          It is all a game of words,
          Nothing more and Nothing better.
          But you just cannot spell "Love,"
          If you do not have the letters.

     TED finds an "M," and "E," and "R." He places them:
     "MOVE ONE ANOTHER.")

                            PORTER

Hop aboard, sir.

Fair Isle?

                              TED

                    Fair Isle.
                    Fair Isle.
                    There's only room for one.

                    No, wait. Tell me.
                    Is there an island further out?
                    An isle that's impossible to reach –
                    Separated, Separated by the sea?

                              PORTER

Aye, there's one.

                              TED

                    That's me.

                         (*aside*)

                    No!
                    I'm not an island.
                    I am a universe.
                    And in this universe…
                    There is an island,
                    Swarmed by the sea.

          (*PORTER rows TED out into the ocean*.)

END.