



DESBROSSES ST

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MICHAEL GORDON

Anonymous Man (2017)

The Crossing, Donald Nally

1. A Tale

2. I Moved

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4. It's Julie Passing Through Town

5. I First Noticed Robinson

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8. Abraham Lincoln's Journey Down Desbrosses Street

9. I Sleep At Home

Produced by **Adrian Peacock**

Engineered by **Argeo Ascani** and **Jeff Svatek**

Edited by **Adrian Peacock** and **Will Brown**

Mixed by **Dave Rowell**

Mastered by **Will Brown**

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Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center (EMPAC)
at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, NY

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Michael Gordon's music is published by Red Poppy, Ltd. (ASCAP).
michaelgordonmusic.com

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Rebecca Siler

Daniel Spratlan

Donald Nally, conductor

Kevin Vondrak, assistant conductor

John Grecia, keyboards



Anonymous Man

words and music by **Michael Gordon**

A NOTE FROM THE COMPOSER:

When I moved into my loft on Desbrosses, the streets were empty, since few people lived there. But both then and now, there were the homeless. Over time the neighborhood changed from an industrial warehouse district to a residential area. Anonymous Man is a memoir about my block. The piece is built around my memories of moving in, meeting my future wife for the first time there, and conversations I have had with two homeless men who made their home on the loading dock across the street.

1. A Tale

This is a tale of two
One lives inside
The other one outside

2. I Moved

I moved into the second floor of an abandoned factory at 22 Desbrosses Street in the fall of '81. The door had been left open. The landlord circumvented New York law by renting out commercial warehouse space to artists looking for a place to live and work.

Outside the streets were dark and desolate. The windows rattled from the cold and rain. The loft was piled high with trash. I called the landlord, Mister K, but no success. The building had been occupied by the Romanoff Caviar Company. The floors of my loft had been covered with waves of undulating concrete. There were drains every six feet. I bought the Reader's Digest Complete Do It Yourself Manual, which had a lot of practical information on building walls and things like that.

I was playing in a band called Peter and the Girlfriends. Peter was a girl who sang. The Girlfriends were a bunch of guys who played guitars and drums. We rehearsed on Desbrosses Street at night at full volume, making all the noise we liked. Then we'd plaster the town with posters for our show and end up at the Market Diner. I was in graduate school at the time and had a job at a furniture store which sold porch swings in Manhattan. A professor from Mississippi, on his Sabbatical year, brought up truckloads of porch swings and hired me to run his store.

3. On Desbrosses Street

Ever since I've lived on Desbrosses Street there have been people living on the street. As long as I remember Larry, quiet and sweet, muttering, waving.

4. It's Julie Passing Through Town

I'm living on Desbrosses Street, it's August 1982.

The buzzer rings, I get the door, it's Julie passing through town.

My roommate Peter said that we would like to meet, Desbrosses Street at 10 AM.

We went to eat – Leroy's Coffee Shop, a local place now long gone.

I looked in her eyes and saw blue green light streaming by, alluring, confiding, aspiring.

Up on the fire escape grating, we spent the day sailing through dense conversations.

We talked about Desbrosses Street, flying trapeze, Miami Beach, arboretums,

Music for Eighteen, the Bal Shem Tov. We ordered rice and French toast.

I said you've got to meet my friend, David Lang in New Haven.

But come back to Desbrosses Street and marry me, it will be happy endings.

5. I First Noticed Robinson

I first noticed Robinson. He was impossible to ignore. He stood out because he had a lot of belongings. He spent the day moving his things within the radius of a few blocks, with a mysterious urgency. And at the end of each block when his belongings were gathered he would stand and read. His reading intrigued me and I started to talk to him.

I first noticed Robinson. He spent the day moving his things like Sisyphus pushing a boulder up hill, day after day after day after day. He would tell me about the books he was reading, in English and French, history and philosophy. And at the end of each block when his belongings were gathered he would stand and read.

One day I stopped to say hello and he was reading the complete plays of Aristophanes. He gave me a quizzical look: "I thought you were a student." I ordered the volume from Amazon. A few days later I read Lysistrata and it all came back to me. The women of Greece end the Peloponnesian Wars by withholding sex from their men.

Not long ago I noticed that Robinson was a little uneasy. “The scaffolding’s down and I will be moving.” After years of renovation the building across the street was finished. And with the increase in foot traffic, the doormen and the new residential tenants, the street offers less protection. The street offers less obscurity. The street offers less anonymity.

6. On That Terrible Beautiful Morning

On that terrible beautiful morning we woke up early and dressed our children for school.

We hurried out the door on that terrible beautiful morning.

We woke up early and walked out into the light.

The sun was gleaming and on that terrible beautiful morning we woke up early and dressed our children for school.

We hurried out the door on that terrible beautiful morning.

We woke up early and walked down Greenwich Street.

The sun was gleaming and we stood inside the courtyard conversing, chatting on about nothing. I looked up at the sky. The sun was shining and on that terrible beautiful morning, everything ran in slow motion. Eerie hushed chaos enveloped the streets, smoke and flames pouring out above us.

7. One Day I Saw

One day I saw a make-shift memorial where Larry lived.

The alcove he slept in was covered with flowers and candles.

I was surprised the Downtown Express ran an article,
“Downtowners mourn the homeless man they called Larry”

One day, in March 2007, I walked into my studio, and from the window I saw a make-shift memorial, across the street a sad tableau – flowers and candles and hand written notes taped up on the wall by the alcove where Larry slept covered with cardboard.

“I used to bring him coffee and lunch,” said Eve.

“A kindly graceful man,” said Mitchell.

“A comforting familiar face,” said Jordi,

“I have two kids, he would always wave to us.”

8. Abraham Lincoln’s Journey Down Desbrosses Street

The funeral cortege left Washington on Friday morning.

At every station crowds flocked to view the passing train.

In Baltimore, in Harrisburg, in Philadelphia, bells tolled, minute guns fired.

On Monday morning, in Jersey City, the coffin was lifted into the hearse.

Then, in solemn silence, the procession moved to the ferry.

On Desbrosses Street every available space was occupied, all eyes toward the approaching steamer.

The glass hearse was festooned with eight large plumes of black and white feathers.

Around the edge were American flags fastened with knots of white and black ribbon, drawn by six grey horses heavily draped in black, each horse led by a groom in mourning.

9. I Sleep At Home

I sleep at home. I have a bed.

I put my head on a pillow.

I have a door. I have a closet.

My clothes are clean and folded.

I have a chair. I can sit down.

There is a light. I can turn it on.

I have a roof. There is a window.

When it is raining I am dry.

When it is thundering I am wondering.

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