

**SONG FROM THE UPROAR:  
THE LIVES AND DEATHS OF ISABELLE EBERHARDT**  
Libretto by Royce Vavrek and Missy Mazzoli

**1. Overture**

*100 years ago Isabelle Eberhardt dies in a flash flood and the pages of her journal are scattered in the wreckage. A journey of remembering begins.*

**2. This World Within Me**

*In Geneva, Isabelle is reeling after the deaths of her father, mother and brother.*

**ISABELLE**

Death moves his hands through me again  
A lonely outsider among men  
I'll keep my silence here  
I'll leave this place alone  
I'll give myself to no one at all.

Death moves his hands through me again  
A lonely outsider among men

This world within me is too small  
But still inside me something sings

I'll keep my silence here  
I'll leave this place alone

**3. Capsized Heart**

**ISABELLE**

Why do you kill me like this, untethered soul?  
Oh, capsized heart.

**CHORUS**

Who will fill the chamber  
left vacant by a mother, brother, father?  
My sorrows do not anchor me.  
I drift along life's random waves,  
to a place my soul will stir again.

**ISABELLE**

And here my capsized heart  
will forget, will forget itself.

**4. Interlude One**

*Isabelle travels by ferry to Algeria.*

**5. I Have Arrived**

*Dressed as an Arab man,  
Isabelle arrives in Algeria at age 20.*

**ISABELLE**

I have arrived -  
I'll pick out my own song,  
a music that will bleed the heart into  
silence.

I have arrived -  
I'll pick out my own song,  
line by line, and at last  
throw back my head and sing.

**6. Interlude Two**

**7. 100 Names for God**

*Isabelle joins a religious brotherhood.*

**CHORUS**

There are one hundred names for God.

**ISABELLE**

God, Allah, Buddha, Bhagwan,  
Waheguru, Bahá, Yahweh  
216 letters, each vowel, each consonant,  
each syllable, eleven names for God.

**CHORUS**

Eleven names for God.

**ISABELLE**

Harmless, joyful, angry, blue, orange,  
white, cream, milk, bourbon.

**CHORUS**

Twenty names for God.

**ISABELLE**

The beetle, the butterfly, the parasite,  
 the host, the visitor,  
 the mother, the child, the grandmother,  
 the grandfather clock  
 the cutlery, the table, the cloth, the thread,  
 the needle, haystack, farmer, worksong  
 the labor, the sweat, the dirt, the weeds.  
 forty-one names for God.

**CHORUS**

Dance, crawl, prostrate, sit  
 stand, shout, shriek  
 whisper, pout, argue  
 to bruise, to bruise another.

**ISABELLE**

Sight, smell, taste, touch  
 songs, hymns, verses, silence, refrains,  
 the sound, the noise, the voice,  
 sixty-five names for God.

**CHORUS**

Prime, odd, even, addition.

**ISABELLE**

Units, miles, bolded lines.

**CHORUS**

Circle, square, exponential.

**ISABELLE**

Square, fence.

**ISABELLE AND CHORUS**

Prison, embrace, remembrance.

**ISABELLE**

Eighty names for God.

**CHORUS**

The dead, the living, the angels,  
 cherubim, seraphim  
 ancestors, generations,  
 the temporary, the permanent  
 paths taken, paths declined,  
 hoofprints in the sand.

**ISABELLE**

Tears of sadness, tears of joy,  
 tears of weariness,  
 wonder, blindness, shivers, love,  
 his name...

All the names, my names,  
 one-hundred names for God.

**8. I am not Mine**

*Isabelle falls in love with an Algerian  
 soldier.*

**ISABELLE**

I am not mine, not mine anymore.

He is my only consolation.  
 He gives my life richness.  
 He, a treasure beyond price.  
 He alone provides my refuge.  
 He. He. He.

I am not mine, not mine anymore.

Uniquely, he reigns.  
 Incontestably he reigns.  
 He alone attracts me.  
 He. He. He.

I am not mine, not mine anymore.

**9. Chanson****CHORUS**

Pendu dans le noir  
 Les étoiles illuminent  
 le contour d'un visage, son visage...

**ISABELLE**

Ancré dans les dunes  
 Le sable trace le contour  
 d'un sourire, son sourire...

**CHORUS**

Cigarettes and anisette  
 Smoke floats while liquor spills.

**ISABELLE**

Rythme dans les vagues  
 L'océan respire le contenu des poumons

Ses poumons qui remplissent les miens

### **ISABELLE AND CHORUS**

Cigarettes and anisette  
Smoke floats while liquor spills.

### **ISABELLE**

Damn this happiness! Damn my joy!  
Maudite soit cette séduction déserte  
Maudit soit tout! Maudit soit son sourire!

### **CHORUS**

Cigarettes and anisette  
Smoke floats while liquor spills.

### **ISABELLE**

I make a stab at happiness.  
Drinking does not relieve my suffering.

Sa constellation vivide  
La lune croissante trace  
un sourire moqueur.

Rhythm in the waves,  
The ocean breathes  
The contents of the lungs.  
His lungs that fill mine.

## **10. Interlude Three**

### **11. Barrel at the Breast**

*Insulted by Isabelle's flirtations with other men,  
her lover insists on a suicide pact.*

### **CHORUS**

Fingers tease the trigger:  
a pact is made.  
Barrel at the breast? Under the chin?  
We ease into the meter  
of our Arab poem.  
Cigarettes and anisette.

Barrel at the breast? Under the chin?  
Smoke floats while liquor spills.

## **12. You are the Dust**

*She frequently leaves her lover to roam  
the desert alone.*

### **ISABELLE**

You are the dust  
You are the sand  
You are the breathing earth  
You are the flood  
You are the road  
You are the flood  
You are the one  
the one most loved  
when left behind.

## **13. Interlude Four**

### **14. The Hunted**

*Isabelle is nearly assassinated by a rival  
religious fanatic. Her life is saved when  
his sword catches on a clothesline and  
cuts her arm.*

### **ISABELLE**

I have arrived -  
I'll pick out my own song,  
a music that will bleed the heart  
into silence.  
I have arrived -  
I'll pick out my own song,  
line by line, and at last  
throw back my head...

I am the hunted, the assassin's prey.  
Men who do not know me  
annihilate a helpless dreamer.  
I am inching towards an abyss,  
the assassin's prey.

### **CHORUS**

I am the hunted.

### **ISABELLE**

In this vast, mysterious world,  
Nearly shattered, nearly destroyed.

With faith and pride intact,  
my soul tempered,  
I am not weakened.

## **15. Oblivion Seekers**

## **16. Mektoub (It is Written)**

*After retreating to a monastery Isabelle receives a letter from her lover and learns that he has left her for another woman. She seeks guidance from the monks, whose only counsel is "It is written". Isabelle summons the flood that will take her life.*

### **ISABELLE**

His absent breath  
drinks from another woman's lips.  
His letter bathed in another woman's sunshine.  
His newfound joy from another woman's smile.

How quickly love evaporates.  
How quickly love evaporates,  
leaving me a desert.

His embrace cradles another woman's back.  
His tenor pours another woman's name.

His fingers weave  
around another woman's glove.  
His beard tickles another woman's cheek.  
His heart beats to another woman's rhythm.

### **CHORUS**

How quickly love evaporates.  
How quickly he evaporates,  
leaving me a desert.

### **ISABELLE**

How quickly he evaporates,  
leaving me parched.  
Leaving me...

O capsized heart,  
This is familiar, this is my companion.  
If tomorrow arrives,  
I will fill it full of warm memories  
and sweet regrets.

Death is familiar, death is my companion.  
Guide me to oblivion.  
No illusions, I wait for you.

### **CHORUS**

How quickly love evaporates.  
How quickly he evaporates,  
leaving me a desert.

### **ISABELLE**

No shudder, no fuss, no agitation,  
no revolt.  
Death is familiar,  
death is my companion.  
Wash me away...

### **17. Here Where Footprints Erase the Graves**

*Isabelle Eberhardt dies at age twenty-seven in a desert flash flood. Her journals are washed away and later pulled from the wreckage.*

### **CHORUS**

Here where footprints erase the graves...

### **ISABELLE**

Here where footprints erase the graves  
a tranquil heart is mine

### **ISABELLE AND CHORUS**

Here where footprints erase the graves  
these hours are  
no more than moments of light.

### **ISABELLE**

These hours are  
no more than moments of light  
in this blanket of blazing stars.