

## Direct Address: Poems

Contributed by Chuck Calabreze

### An Introduction to Tonight's Performance

A chattering in the eaves.Â A forceful muttering.  
 Words carefully chosen, then smeared with beargrease.  
 Not the language of flurry and ease.Â Not the song  
 of the defrocked vigilante.Â Not the hemmed and attenuated.  
 The truculent minnesinger.Â But the harried flight  
 of the marauding crow.Â Missile sprung from the desert.  
 Catapulted vixen.Â Acrid linguist.Â Cartwheeling Taoist.  
 It's rumored they could fly, watch you eating your rice—  
 your ineffectual chopsticking and long-grained beard—  
 hover above you, disembodied, then return before dawn.  
 That they were not given to gossip was a godsend. Â  
 But what about this sputtering saxophone?Â How to explain that  
 to the moderate drinkers gathered seatward this evening?  
 Ladies and gentlemen, the modern attention requires  
 disjunctiveness, ballistics, contortions.Â Requires  
 that we drive this tractor-trailer filled with tortured geese  
 through the Holland Tunnels of your ears.Â Forgive us,  
 we can neither fly nor cartwheel effectively.Â Therefore  
 we have chosen the screams of wounded animals as our theme.  
 That there will be more wounded requiring more such  
 compositions is a given.Â That ticket prices will reflect this trend.  
 That you should use the exits positioned at the foot of the stage  
 and not burst unannounced through the corrugated steel.  
 The management would like to remind you that one hails  
 a taxi, one does not ambush, derail, or otherwise interfere with  
 or impede such commuter-oriented vehicles.Â They are a  
 privilege and not a right.Â If the perpetrator does not  
 come forward, we will remain in our seats until we have  
 exhausted the abuses we have planned for the various instruments.  
 That you might wish to avoid this.Â That if the severed hand  
 on the apron is any indication.Â That announcements from the stage  
 shall be random and without merit.Â That our purchase on reality  
 seems tenuous.Â Please welcome if you will.Â You may choose  
 not to welcome, of course, but the performance will occur regardless.

### Festival

Wank.Â Wank.Â Testing one two.Â The night, the organism.Â The rented trucks, the wired-up and jump-started, the  
 minibuses.Â The highway clogged with what's happenings, with bongos and where the hormones tick tick tick.Â So we  
 drove the vee dub into the ditch, leaped the fence, and hit drives with putters from the miniature golf course.Â He's house  
 artist now at a local rock â€n' roll club.Â She had some skills, but the technology changes so fast.Â For a while, when the  
 guitars filled the air with messages, when the giggling Viet Nam vet forgot he was driving and crunched Juicy Plantman's  
 U-Haul, a voice told a dark story.Â He was backing up.Â Someone rolled off the roof, landed on his feet.Â Everyone  
 cheered.Â America, freedom.Â A war somewhere.Â When he came home from Nam he tried to kill his brother who turned  
 him on to acid and now he was driving into trees and trucks.Â Â Happy, he said, happy happy in this unexpected America.

### Moving Freely About the Cabin

Unbuckled now.Â Seatback and tray table  
 in a less-than-upright position.Â Who will say  
 I am not the happy genius etc., riding  
 thermals between Des Moines and Dubuque  
 like an afternoon vulture.Â The woman  
 with the infant at her breast, the man  
 with his Wall Street Journal—I contain  
 multitudes, my breasts enormous

and swollen with milk, my bank accounts  
 unaccountably huge.Â I have kicked  
 my habits.Â I have vetted my long-term  
 investments.Â Look at me, moving  
 freely about the cabin.Â Look at me,  
 athwart the gunnels, my massive  
 missive tucked beneath my arm.Â My flight  
 attendant proffers a beverage; my captain,  
 O captain, hopes I am enjoying my flight. Â  
 While the miserable shudder at bus stops  
 or risk gangland executions, while  
 the complacent wade into honest back-  
 wrenching jobs or cross out bank,  
 movie store, grocery, I am engaged to recite  
 to the assembled hobbyists and hopefuls,  
 to the tenured and tracked, to the wan coeds  
 matriculating by the fire exit.Â Then I'm  
 island-bound to a conference on  
 The Caribbean Sea as Metaphor  
 during which I will declaim  
 my fatuous "St. Kitts Ode," committed  
 to secure the invitation, but which also  
 demonstrates my unequalled grasp  
 of the semi colon—"not since Wordsworth"  
 the critics intone—and my keen eye  
 for particulars:Â cabanas blooming pale  
 in paler light, bikinis like hammocks  
 for the sleepy breasts.Â Six miles up,  
 I perambulate among the REM-sleepers  
 and cellophane-crinklers, among the lap-topped  
 and newly-pensioned.Â Tomorrow, I shall be  
 their spokesman, their voice, celebrating  
 myself, assuming what they assume,  
 barbarically yawping in this language  
 that mostly makes them nod and drowse.

## Dead Squirrel

Â Â Â Â Â after Fred Frith

Possibly amidst the smashing glass. Â  
 There amongst the tambourine marchers.  
 Possibly before the door slams. Â  
 Before the drummer stumbles.Â Before  
 the scatteration of cymbal and tom,  
 the crash and rattle of toppling snare. Â  
 Possibly before the pharmacist staples  
 the bag to the bag to the label  
 to the receipt.Â Possibly there, among  
 the ordinary gleamings in the silverware  
 drawer, the wine glass coaxed into song. Â  
 Possibly before the ambulances arrive, before  
 the lumberyard truck starts backing  
 and the geese lay their necks along the grass  
 and emit the hissing blat we learned  
 to call honking.Â Possibly before someone  
 climbs tableside and attempts a ragged  
 Mr. Bojangles imitation.Â Possibly  
 before the dinner music.Â Before  
 epistemology.Â Before the arrival of the latest  
 tropical depression.Â Before Romanticism. Â  
 Primitivism.Â Possibly before  
 the fight song, the drinking song,  
 the mystical ravings.Â Back there,

in the dawn of time immemorial  
 or something rather like it.Â Before  
 the baying hounds.Â Before the cartographers  
 mapped even the darkest caverns  
 of our collective psyche.  
 Before blenders.Â Crock pots. Â  
 Before the lap dancer tossed  
 the man's drink in his face.Â Before  
 lap dancers.Â Before drinks.Â Even before faces.  
 Somewhere during the cacophonous  
 ceremony we were beginning to commence  
 to initiate, quite possibly the hysterical  
 combatants were shouting  
 over and over for no reason:Â Dead squirrel!  
 Whether celebration or lament  
 we cannot know, but the chant was,  
 reports indicate, accompanied by much  
 high-stepping and forceful vomiting, Â  
 by smashing glass, door slams,  
 and stumbling drummers:Â Dead Squirrel!

#### Letter to M.

Those troglodytes you ravished in the Tuillerie were never  
 among my favorites.Â I had hoped you would avenge yourself  
 with the pallid stockbroker who crimped my Pinto.Â Such  
 callousness notwithstanding, I long still  
 for the incandescence of your linguistic events. Â  
 As for my nights, I spend them tooling along the plangent  
 Avenida de Shitkickers here in El Paso, where the jackrabbits'  
 incessant leaping and twitching reminds me of the  
 by-now-famous "interpretive dance"  
 you performed at Tommy's Show Club.Â Though what  
 you were interpreting and for whom remains obscure,  
 I don't begrudge you the peso-filled waistband or  
 the festival of macho posturing that ensued.Â I do, however,  
 wish that you'd assigned me a more suitable role.  
 While appearing as a Minister of God satisfied some  
 deep craving for a more virtuous existence, it placed me  
 in a somewhat compromised position vis a vis those cretins  
 who pursued you to the jukebox and then alternately  
 cackled and swooned outside your dressing room door.  
 You will recall you thought they were "sweet"  
 until they hurled a dwarf over the partition.Â Might  
 I suggest that you also misjudged me?Â You questioned  
 my intentions.Â Fair enough.Â By now, it should be clear  
 that your breasts were part of the attraction, as were  
 your characteristic, if somewhat obtuse, syntactical procedures.  
 Frankly, I never minded being called "Ralphie," and your  
 refusal to recognize me on the street caused only a tremor  
 of chagrin.Â If you will meet me outside the Three Star  
 Desert Motel, I will return your pet nematodes, and perhaps  
 we can share a Coruscating Camisole in the lobby bar.  
 Remember how we used to set them aflame  
 with your "Bugling Elk" lighter?Â I shall never forget  
 the first time you raised your face from the fuming chalice—  
 your singed eyebrows, your necklace of fire.Â If you will wear  
 your velvet jodhpurs, I will wear my loin cloth  
 and fashion my hair into the Evil Knievel upsweep,  
 whose meaning remains obscure, rooted as you always said,  
 in our age's "profound cultural myopia." Â