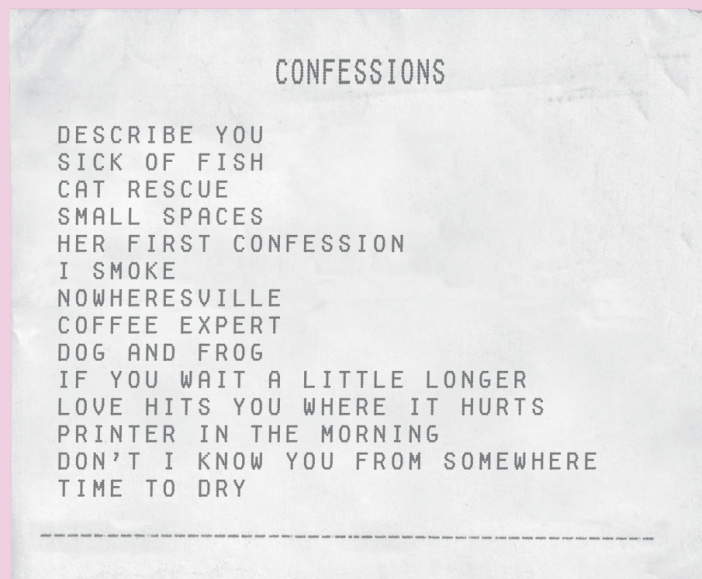


NICO MUHLY
& TEITUR

CONFESSIONS



Teitur vocals

Holland Baroque 1st Violins: **Lidewij van der Voort, David Wish, Franc Polman, Aira Maria Lehtipuu.** 2nd Violins: **George Crawford, Maite Larburu, Gabriele Wunsch, Agnieszka Świątkowska.**
Violas: **Esther van der Eijk, Jan Willem Vis, Bernadette Verhagen.**
Celli: **Lucy Scotchmer, Tomasz Pokrzywiński.** Violone: **James Munro.**
Recorder: **Saskia Coolen.** Lute: **Andreas Arend.**
Harpsichord: **Tineke Steenbrink.**

Conducted by **Nico Muhly**

All songs written by **Teitur Lassen** and **Nico Muhly**

Published by **Arlo & Betty Music** (KODA/ASCAP) / **St. Rose Music Publishing Co. Inc. & Chester Music Ltd.** (ASCAP/PRS)
except: “Describe You” — text adapted from “I Was Trying to Describe You” by **Richard Brautigan**, published by Sterling Lord Literistic; music by **Teitur Lassen** and **Nico Muhly** and published by **Arlo & Betty Music** (KODA/ASCAP) / **St. Rose Music Publishing Co. Inc. & Chester Music Ltd.** (ASCAP/PRS)
“Nowheresville” — written by **Teitur Lassen, Nico Muhly** and **Jeff Cohen**, published by **Arlo & Betty Music** (KODA/ASCAP) / **St. Rose Music Publishing Co. Inc. & Chester Music Ltd.** (ASCAP/PRS) / **As You Wish Music** (BMI)

Recorded at **Muziekcentrum Frits Philips**, Eindhoven, Netherlands

Engineered by **Paul Jeukendrup**

Edited by **Teitur** at Studio Bloch, Tórshavn, Faroe Islands

Mixed by **Hector Castillo**

Mastered by **Andy Jackson** at Tube Mastering

Design by **Ben Tousley**

Photograph of Nico Muhly and Teitur by **Tróndur Dalsgarð**

Photograph of Holland Baroque by **Wouter Jansen**

When Nico Muhly was invited to be composer-in-residence at Muziekgebouw Eindhoven, the music hall's artistic manager, Frank Veenstra, encouraged him to collaborate with whomever he chose. Muhly had long admired the singer/songwriter Teitur Lassen (who uses only his first name professionally) and reached out to him about joining forces. Hailing from the Faroe Islands, halfway between Norway and Iceland in the North Atlantic, Teitur has long been a successful pop artist in Europe.

Muhly recalls, "Around the time I met Teitur, he had released this album called *The Singer*, which was the most beautiful and strange thing, really stripped down, and he also had released an album in Faroese. It's a weird little gem of a thing and it's one of my favorite albums in the world mainly because it's so niche. 'Niche' isn't even the right word—it's so specific, from this tiny country with 35,000 people living in it, speaking this tiny language that is unintelligible even to Icelandic people. It's about being from a small place, and you realize so much of his life is about this belonging and this alienation and his lyrics are about those things. All this sense of home and away is very active in his work—and in mine."

Teitur had similarly been drawn to Muhly's compositions, particularly to his interpretation of the traditional murder ballad "Two Sisters," on the album *Mothertongue*. With Sam Amidon on vocals, Muhly deconstructs the well-worn narrative, making the piece about the words themselves, not the progression of the grim tale. The result is hypnotic and unsettling. Teitur says, "I was obsessing about that song. 'If You Wait' came about the same way, a kind of replication of the song that Nico had done, about the intensity of waiting, embracing that embarrassing silence and making music with it."

Confessions was begun during Muhly's time in Eindhoven, and ultimately recorded with the ensemble Holland Baroque.

The title is both forthright and misleading: No shameful secrets are unearthed, no lurid incidents exposed; these songs are more meditations than revelations, their lyrics inspired by, and sometimes directly culled from, the most innocuous and banal video posts and commentary the pair could find circa 2008 on the then three-year-old YouTube site—"bizarre, anonymous, non-viral, under-the-radar YouTube videos that people make," as Muhly puts it.

"We came up with this premise of boring videos, home videos," Teitur explains. "It was a time when everyone was posting these meaningless videos. It was just fascinating when we started watching them. And, typical for Nico, he started over-exploring things, sending me videos all the time. We were watching the craziest, most mundane stuff, and the more you watched them the more you started to wonder, 'What is behind this? Why are people

doing this?' They are really saying, 'This is really beautiful, this is really sick, this is me,' people confessing things. And that gave us the title for the record."

"Teitur took a lot of these things," continues Muhly, "and looked at the comments and imagined the world that these people inhabited. We also solicited some anonymous Dutch videos, people telling us things that are unexpected, including this woman who said, 'I love the smell of my printer in the morning.' It made me so happy. That smell is so specific. These are not confessions in a dirty way but more like if you went over to a friend's house ten minutes before they expected you and you got a glimpse into something private. As a songwriter, Teitur focuses on a little detail or a little gesture and then one can divine bigger content."

The lyrics are simple, matter-of-fact, fragmentary, funny, and strange—as compellingly primitive as outsider art—yet they attain a certain grandeur paired with the gorgeous and expressive music that Muhly



composed and arranged for Holland Baroque. In performance, the juxtaposition of Teitur's plaintive voice and the ensemble's elegant playing is often surprisingly moving, calling forth the emotions implicit behind the sketched-in scenarios of the lyrics: There is hope, longing, regret, failure, resolve. A woman faces a standoff with her cat, stuck in a tree; a man tries to find words to describe what a woman looks like but can only find words to say what she isn't. A person imagines him- or herself as a sushi roll, trying to make meaningful contact with the diners before being "lifted into their mouths and broken in two, lying there melting somewhere between the sadness of their tongue and teeth." Someone waits and waits, and then waits a little longer, anticipating something, anything, to happen.

For the young members of Holland Baroque, *Confessions* offered a unique opportunity to pursue their core mission, "to convince a large and varied audience of the flexibility and vitality of (Baroque) music." When he began his tenure at Eindhoven, Muhly says, "I knew I wanted to work with this ensemble. They perform standing up, and they are as old school as you'd like, but they chewed into this material really gleefully. It was a kind of magic project actually." As Muhly notes, "The distance between contemporary listening and Baroque music is one of the most heartbreaking and interesting things. Most of the music I like is from the 17th century or before. It's a tradition that never stopped—a small tradition, a specific one. There's something incredibly direct about Baroque music and Baroque instruments. Oftentimes when I am working with modern string

players, it takes a lot of written instructions to get them to do what a Baroque player would pick up a violin and do naturally. I find that incredibly moving. It's like someone finally speaks your language fluently, rather than trying to constantly translate what's in your head through a bunch of mediating forces. But it also posed a different challenge. Baroque musicians aren't accustomed to the sorts of rhythms attendant to contemporary music, and that brought another interesting tension to the project."

The original four songs from Eindhoven worked so well that Teitur and Muhly continued writing. By 2009, they had a concert-length piece comprising the 14 songs on *Confessions*. Originally conceiving of it as an audio-video concert presentation, Muhly, Teitur, and Holland Baroque toured the Netherlands, performing the piece with the videos that inspired it projected behind the players. But, as this recording of *Confessions* illustrates, the videos are merely a jumping-off point. Nico and Teitur's songs conjure an odd and vivid environment all their own.

At the conclusion of their tour, Muhly, Teitur, and Holland Baroque recorded *Confessions*, with no real plan as to when and how it might be released. The years between its recording and its release have arguably imbued *Confessions* with an even greater poignancy. These stories drawn from the internet of 2008 seem quainter, more innocent and folksy than the more calculated, metric-driven streams of content flooding YouTube and other outlets now—music from the distant world of eight years ago.

Michael Hill, June 2016

Describe You

I was trying to describe you to someone. You don't look like anyone I've seen before. I couldn't say she looks just like Jane Fonda. You don't look like Jane Fonda at all. I finally ended up describing you as a movie I saw when I was a child. I think I was seven or eight or six, it was a movie about rural electrification. The movie, it was about farmers living in the country without electricity. They didn't have any appliances and they had to use lanterns. They put poles across the countryside and strung wire over fields and pastures, there was an incredible heroic dimension. The movie showed electricity like a young Greek god coming to take away forever the dark ways of life. I was trying to describe you to someone. You don't look like anyone I've seen before. I couldn't say she looks just like Jane Fonda. I couldn't say her mouth is a little different. You don't look like Jane Fonda at all.

Cat Rescue

My cat is stuck up in a tree. He is up about forty, fifty feet. He's been gone for three and a half days and it is cold with snow flurries. I have tried with food. I have tried opening tuna. The fire department is no use and the tree people aren't answering or calling me back. I can't believe he's up there. It's the scariest thing ever. We've been yelling and trying to coax him, but nothing seems to work.

Small Spaces

The world has many faces. Some of them reside in small spaces. Very little rooms with cyber sounds, random noises. Words and visuals made from individuals. A waterhole of blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. An oasis of whatever. Small spaces. Small spaces. Small spaces. Small spaces.

Her First Confession

She swears it was a twist of faith. She spoke from her belly without shame. While David and Goliath were fighting in the Bible she signed her name and walked away. Her first confession was caught on camera.

I Smoke

I always start to smoke in the summer when I'm happy, but then I keep on smoking because I'm lonely and sad. I think it's time to quit. In a way the annual summer fair always makes me sad. It makes me think I really got stuck in the same little town for much too long. I always start to smoke in the summer when I'm happy.

Nowheresville

Landed here in Nowheresville, the stars are out of sight. Ended up in Nowheresville. A drunken house up on a hill with a missing light. Somewhere lost in Nowheresville tonight. The subtleness of sad, it wasn't all that bad. It's always when you go you don't know what you had. I met a man in Nowheresville, I never asked his name, he said he came from Nowheresville. Bottles on the windowsill, the sober sound of rain. We had a drink in Nowheresville again. It's just another town that don't need me around. I guess they're living fine, together killing time. The subtleness of sad, it wasn't all that bad. It's always when you go you don't know what you had.

Coffee Expert

My third life is in the arts. Busy with the other two, my other lives are making it through. My third life is in the arts. I love to watch perfect things. I place my feet down on the floor and stare into a screen with open eyes. I love to watch perfect things. What have I got to lose? What have I got to lose? What have I got to lose? What have I got to lose? What have I got to lose? What have I got to lose? What have I got to lose? What have I got to lose?

If You Wait a Little Longer

If... If you... If you wait... If you wait a... If you wait a little... If you wait a little longer... If you wait a little longer than... If you wait a little longer than you... If you wait a little longer than you normally... If you wait a little longer than you normally would... The most... The most amazing... The most amazing thing may... The most amazing thing may appear... If you wait a little longer than you normally would the most amazing thing may appear... If you wait a little longer than you normally would the most amazing thing may appear... If you wait a little longer than you normally would the most amazing thing may appear... If you wait a little longer than you normally would the most amazing thing may appear... If you wait a little longer than you normally would the most amazing thing may appear... Most likely nothing will happen.

Love Hits You Where It Hurts

It wasn't she who was my best friend. It wasn't she who said all the right things. Love, love, love hits you where it hurts. Hits you where it hurts. She stood in my way. She did everything wrong. She made me change my mind. Love, love, love hits you where it hurts. How I yelled, how I yelled. How the room fell silent. How I cried, how I cried. Why, she pushed me to the side? She came from nowhere. Pushed me off a cliff. She's the one I never expected. She's a mistake I never corrected.

Printer in the Morning

I love the smell of my printer in the morning. Forget about coffee. Forget about falling leaves or the smell of shampoo. It's the smell of my printer in the morning that really makes my day. In the office space, in the orderly world where

paper is placed into trays. It's the smell of my printer in the morning. It's my call of duty, it's the boss of my work. It's your scent of bacon. It's your gas station. I love the smell of my printer in the morning.

Don't I Know You from Somewhere

If I were a sushi roll traversing through a Japanese kitchen I would be mostly fascinated by the people there. Their welcoming arms and their strange voices. Their fingers flying around immersed in conversation. I would like to ask them a question. Don't I know you from somewhere? Don't I know you from somewhere? Don't I know you from somewhere? They would be too busy to answer me. Too hungry and happy with their lives. Busy soaking up the atmosphere. This restaurant with pictures of slinky fish on the wall. The sharp sound of knives and the smell of soy and ginger still in their nostrils. I would be in awe of their breath, their breath, their breath. I could hardly wait to be lifted into their mouths and get broken in two. Lie there melting somewhere between the sadness of their tongue and teeth. Don't I know you from somewhere? Don't I know you from somewhere? Don't I know you from somewhere? Don't I know you from somewhere?

Time to Dry

Why does everything take time to dry when you're soaking wet? You always wait for sunshine. I must confess, it's true what they say, I'm better off this way. Pinching every drop, waiting for my tears to evaporate. The hours and seconds pass so slowly. Oh, why must everything rewind? Why do you have to wait until the dream is over to understand. First you see them come and then you see them go away. Dreams turn into nightmares and hopes turn into fears. In the end they always make amends. Life is much too short, everyone is forced to believe again.

CONFESSIONS



NICO MUHLY
& TEITUR

SPECIAL THANKS: **Frank Veenstra** for his constant support and fervent vision, **Judith Steenbrink**, **Tineke Steenbrink** and **Holland Baroque**, everybody at the **Muziekcentrum Frits Philips Eindhoven**, **Jim Keller** & **Zoë Knight** at **St. Rose Music**, **Betti Plug**, **Ronnie Kroes**, **Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds**, **Gemeente Eindhoven**, **Fontys Hogescholen**, **SNS Reaal Fonds en Nederlands Fonds voor Podiumkunsten** and **Christian Ulf-Hansen**.

Special thanks from **Arlo & Betty Recordings** and **Teitur** to production partner **Alexander Shulgin** and **Gruppa Kompaniy Familia LLC**.

Teitur appears courtesy of **Arlo & Betty Recordings Ltd.**

Nico Muhly appears courtesy of **St. Rose Management**, New York



ST. ROSE
MUSIC

NONESUCH RECORDS INC., A WARNER MUSIC GROUP COMPANY, 1633 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, NY 10019. © & © 2016 ARLO & BETTY RECORDINGS LTD. AND ST. ROSE MANAGEMENT & PUBLISHING, UNDER LICENSE TO NONESUCH RECORDS INC. FOR THE UNITED STATES AND WEA INTERNATIONAL INC. FOR THE WORLD OUTSIDE OF THE UNITED STATES. WARNING: UNAUTHORIZED REPRODUCTION OF THIS RECORDING IS PROHIBITED BY FEDERAL LAW AND SUBJECT TO CRIMINAL PROSECUTION.