Pallavi  
Meditation on Care (2019)  
By Akshaya AT Tucker

"Pallavi (Puh-la-vee), Meditation on Care is about recovery. It takes inspiration from two sources: one is a bhajan (devotional song) about the biggest moment of transformation in our lives. The first line of this song roughly translates from the Hindi to, "One day, Mother [Goddess] Kali, we will go together in light." "Ek din Kali Maa" has been present, always, for my family as we've grieved our own dear ones; and present again in 2018. It is more than a comfort; it is a presence that restores and embraces. If the music in Pallavi feels like a dear friend giving you a hug as you listen, then I will be very happy!

I created a fantasy on this melody, treating it like the theme in Odissi 'Pallavi' form. The Pallavi genre within Odissi dance repertoire is the second inspiration behind the piece. I studied the Odissi style of Classical Indian dance for 20 years under Guru Ranjanaa Devi, and learned andperformed about eight compositions of this type. Pallavi's are named for their Raag, and are abstract pieces that contain no particular narrative. They involve the repetition of one melody over evolving musical and gestural elements. They move from slow and sensuous, to fast and trance-like, even virtuosic. For me, dancing a Pallavi provides a sense of care and well-being. They are pure sweetness; a means of becoming absorbed by the raag; and feeling proud and comfortable in my own skin as a woman. This is what I've tried to represent musically. This Pallavi extolls the strength of women, especially my mom. The performer is welcome to direct this musical spirit of restoration to whoever needs it in their own life.

I had an image of balancing, physically, emotionally - even on different strings of the instrument! - that worked its way into the violin writing. There are certain other particularities of learning Odissi dance that came into the music as well. I've used some rhythmic manipulations that dress up the melody in a new suit of clothes each time it appears, as you find frequently in Odissi music. The violin also occasionally imitates the timbre of the buzzing cassette tapes we practice dance to. These are some not particularly high-tech recordings made in India during the 1980s, by friends of my dance Guru -- the instruments included a voice, pakhawaj (two-headed drum), drone, and flute or sitar. The static was always noticeable during the opening alap (slow improvisation on the raag), and, true to form, it appears at the opening of this piece too.

I would like to thank Gabriela Lena Frank and Johnny Gandelsman for their mentorship, excellent advice and musical presence. This music is made more full by their generosity."