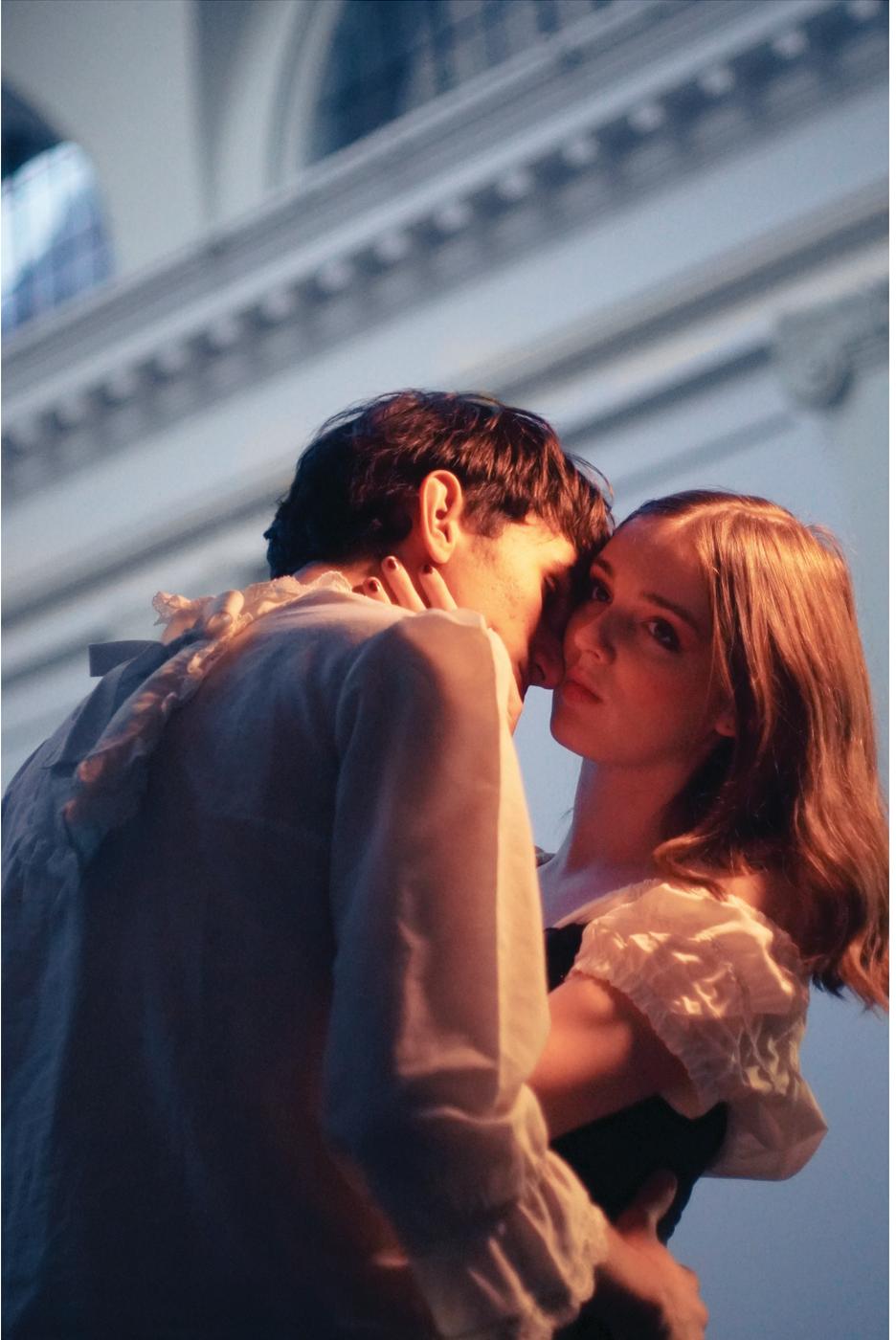


Pleasance Theatre
Programme



**ROMEO
AND
JULIET**



ROMEO AND JULIET

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

When Shakespeare's works are performed in the modern day, especially at the amateur or student level, they are almost always described in a way in which the first word after the title of the show is 'but.' Last year's EUSC mainterm described itself as "*Much Ado About Nothing* but it's set in the 1970s music industry." These renditions can be and often are incredible, but the most important decision we could make on *ROMEO AND JULIET* was that we wanted to do it with no buts. That's not to say it's a faithful Elizabethan performance, this production invokes Bosch, Rimbaud, and more modern influences, but we've let the text guide us as to what those are and where they fall. We sought not to duplicate what a production of *Romeo & Juliet* would have been in Shakespeare's time, but to replicate what his audience would have felt, and trace those reactions back to their origins for an audience of today. This project has been a highly ambitious undertaking by a team of over 50 people, working since September, and we are incredibly proud to bring you this rendition of the most legendary love story ever written. Thank you for coming, and we hope you enjoy the show.

Kai Smolin
Producer

ABOUT THE EUSC

The Edinburgh University Shakespeare Company (EUSC) has been creating bold and innovative adaptations of Shakespeare's work with students across Edinburgh. Dedicated to making Shakespeare exciting and collaborative, the society welcomes anyone with an interest in acting, directing, design, or theatre-making. Beyond the stage, the society is a vibrant social community, with a standout event in the calendar being the annual Masquerade Ball! At its heart, EUSC is about bringing people together to learn, to experiment, and to rediscover Shakespeare on a student stage.

Amelia Duda
President

THE PRODUCTION

Salvador Kent.....	Director
Ben Kay.....	Designer
Rebecca Mahar.....	Dramaturg, Fight Director, Intimacy Director
Kay Wilson.....	Stage Manger
Alice Jones.....	Stage Manager
Florrie Prichard Jones.....	Assistant Director
Cooper Mortlock.....	Assistant Fight Director
Jack Read.....	Lighting Designer
Ella Catherall.....	Sound Designer
Mary Angélique Boyd.....	Costume Designer
Moira Hamilton.....	Mask Maker
Charles Wilkie.....	Set Carpenter
Lauren Davina.....	Props Master
Conor McPhail.....	Set Builder
Logan Tarvit.....	Set Builder
Emma Robb.....	Lighting Assistant
Gracie Spencer.....	Lighting Assistant
Alyssa Tinfina.....	Costume Assistant
Leo Thomson.....	Costume Assistant
Lara Thorns.....	Costume Assistant
Alara Uzun.....	Costume Assistant
Holly Shaw.....	Costume Assistant
Kai Smolin.....	Producer, Graphic Designer
Rose Sarafilovic.....	Producer
Elle Catherine Willcocks.....	Art Director
Rae Phillips-Smith.....	Photographer
Liz Cowan.....	Illustrator
Maysan Abdidayim.....	Welfare Contact



THE COMPANY



Connie Bailie as Rosaline

The Paint Job (2023), Theatre Paradok.
Pygmalion (2024), EUTC. *Crawl* (2025), EUTC.
Ulster American (2026), EUTC.



Rishi Bhardwaj as Abram/Friar John

Candlewasters Autumn (2025), EUTC
Candlewasters. Box of Beckett (2026), EUTC.
Shut Up Shakespeare! (2026), EUSC.



Gracie Booth as Ensemble

Candlewasters Autum (2025), EUTC
Candlewasters.



Amelia Duda as Ensemble

1984 (2024), EUTC. *Candlewasters* (2024), EUTC. *Candlewasters*. *Lazarus* (2024), EUTC. *Much Ado About Nothing* (2025), EUSC. *Road* (2025), EUTC.



Sam Gearing as Romeo

1984 (2024), EUTC. *Despicable Panto* (2024), EUTC. *Much Ado About Nothing* (2025), EUSC. *Road* (2025), EUTC. *El Público* (2025), EUSS. *The Price of Silver* (2025), Bleeding Cowboy Productions. *Candlewasters Autumn* (2025), EUTC. *Candlewasters*.



Rufus Goodman as Benvolio

The Boys in the Band (2024) EUTC. *Lazarus* (2024) EUTC. *A Cat's Paradise* (2025) Paradok Theatre. *Antigone* (2025) EUTC. *Little Women* (2025) EUTC. *The Black Prince* (2026) EUTC.



Will Grice as Paris

1984 (2024), EUTC. *Angels In America: Millennium Approaches* (2024), EUTC. *Road* (2025), EUTC. *Cody and Beau: A Wild West Story* (2025), Dylan and Will Theatre Company. *Ulster American* (2026), EUTC.



Raphaella Hawkins as Lady Capulet

1984 (2024), EUTC. *Lazarus* (2024), EUTC. *The End of the Line* (2024), Theatre Paradok. *Shoebox 'd* (2025), EUTC. *The End of the Line* (2025), EUTC. *Jellyfish* (2025), EUTC.



Hal Hobson as Montague

Under Milk Wood (2024), EUTC. *Antigone* (2025), EUTC.



Dylan Kaeuper as Tybalt

1984 (2024), EUTC. *The Boys In The Band* (2024), EUTC. *Much Ado About Nothing* (2025), EUSC. *Road* (2025), EUTC. *Cody and Beau: A Wild West Story* (2025), Dylan and Will Theatre Company. *Little Women* (2025), EUTC. *Ulster American* (2025), EUTC.



Hunter King as Friar Laurence

The Rocky Horror Show (2022), KCC Theatre. *Little Shop of Horrors* (2024), EUSOG. *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches* (2024), EUTC. *Into The Woods* (2025), KCC Theatre. *Little Women* (2025), EUTC.



Anya McChristie as Juliet

Payback (2023) ITV. *Road* (2025) EUTC. *El Público* (2025) EUSS. *Jellyfish* (2025) EUTC. *Russian Roulette Play* (2025) Theatre Paradok. *Hex Vets and Magic Pets* (2026) Nickelodeon.



Leonardo Moretti-Rando as Balthasar

A Matter of Life and Death (2022), Group 64. *El Público* (2025), EUSS.



Nik Pivovarsky as Sampson

Candlewasters Autumn (2025), EUTC
Candlewasters.



Tai Remus-Elliot as Capulet

Posh (2022), Theatre Paradok. *Improvverts* (2023-2026), EUTC. *Little Shop of Horrors* (2023), EUSOG. *The Dink Rodgers Show* (2024), Theatre Paradok. *Ghosts* (2025), Nomadic Theatre.



Theo Riviere as Gregory

Immaculate (2025), EUTC, *Shut Up Shakespeare!* (2026), EUSC



Noah Sarvesvaran as Mercutio

Box of Beckett (2026), EUTC. *Candlewasters Autumn* (2025), EUTC. *Candlewasters. Endgame* (2025), EUTC. *Antigone* (2025), Mythography Collective. *El Público* (2025), EUSS. *Road* (2025), EUTC. *Time Bends* (2025), EUTC. *The Boys in the Band* (2024), EUTC



Sebastian Schneeberger as Prince Escalus

Guys and Dolls (2024), EU Footlights. *Beauty & the Beast* (2025), Edinburgh Music Theatre. *Dear Evan Hansen* (2026), Room 29.



Reuben Stickland as Peter

The T's and C's (2025), EUTC. *Fools and Knaves* (2025), EUTC. *The End of the Line* (2025), EUTC.



Isabella Velarde as Nurse

Who's Afraid of Santa Claus? (2025), Half Trick Theatre. *Let's Not Meet* (2025) Syccla's Bite. *Living with the Dead* (2025) NotsoNice! Theatre Company



Emma Ward as Lady Montague/Apothecary

Macbeth (2022), RSC, *Merry Wives of Windsor* (2023), RSC, *Praxis* (2024) UWS, *Kinnow* (2025), ENU, *You Are My Sunshine* (2025), Dead Battery Pictures







FOR NOW, THESE HOT DAYS, IS THE MAD BLOOD STIRRING—NOTES ON ROMEO & JULIET

By Salvador Kent

T.S. Eliot once said that each generation is wrong about Shakespeare in a new way. This has been my first time directing his work, on this strange, early tragedy that has become shorthand for love in the Western World. Below are my notes on this iconic text, presented as (mis)interpretations.

The play is quite different to what I sense to be the cultural idea of it. The literary critic Julia Kristeva points out that the second quarto calls itself **THE MOST EXCELLENT AND LAMENTABLE TRAGEDIE OF ROMEO & JULIET**. She highlights the ambivalence of this language, how can something be both ‘excellent’ and ‘lamentable’? Indeed, the play is often ambivalent. It switches form often, playing with irony before earnestness, comedy before tragedy. Its philosophical oppositions are played with in opposite characters: Montague vs Capulet, Romeo vs Mercutio, Capulet vs Juliet, Nurse vs Peter and so on. The oppositions are also present in the language: “O Brawling Love, O Loving Hate!” “O Serpent Heart hid with Flowering Face!”. This work is one full of oxymoron.

Romeo and Juliet’s treatment of love is more about longing, plotting and absence than the flesh and blood relationship between the lovers themselves. Their time together is brief, dangerous and hyperbolic, and whilst actors might instinctively read it as gentle, there is serious violence underneath it. Juliet tells Romeo she would kill him as a bird and longs for him to be cut out into little stars when he dies. Romeo is desperate to accept this death and would do so to spend a minute with Juliet before the last time they look upon each other alive. Their love is a short fuse, a destructive act, doomed due to their youth and their family’s politics. But something that is never in question is that they do love. They love each other uniquely and deeply, and beyond the simple constructions of healthy relationships pervading modern discourse on the subject. There is nothing healthy about this relationship, but that is precisely the point of it. Sometimes love is dangerous and reckless and it is still love.

Verona is a broken society. Sophie Duncan in her book *Searching for Juliet* borrows Jan Kott’s description of Lear’s world and puts it onto Verona:

The earth empty and bleeding. In the second scene of the play, Capulet remarks that the earth has swallowed all his hopes. This is a violent society full of death, which is why we've chosen to evoke a tomb with our design. There is regular, needless violence, there are regular, needless class divisions and regular, needless misogyny.

Indeed, the play paints the portrait of complex, bad men. Mercutio is a crowdpleaser but his words paint the picture of a lustful pragmatist, entirely disapproving of Romeo's ideals of love. In this production, we invent a relationship with Rosaline, in order to problematise his most outrageous invocation "O that she were an open-arse / Thou a poperin pear!". It might still be an amusing image, but underneath it is a way of sex that reduces it to straight lust. Shakespeare's genius is that he doesn't moralise it, indeed Harold Bloom argues that Mercutio's early death is due to the philosophical power of his line of argument—how can Romeo & Juliet love when this brilliant, cynical bastard argues so vividly against the thing?! But his speeches, as dazzling as they are, also disturb, and we have tried to show them from both perspectives.

Shakespeare constructs a twisted domestic setting in the Capulet household, a group of women ruled over by a man who is a tyrannical clown.





Their community is not strong, but divided and broken, and an origin point for our Juliet has been her profound need to escape her life. She does this through love—perhaps an imperfect escape, but it is precisely this theme the play interrogates. If you live in a broken home, in a broken world, as someone whose identity is directly oppressed by the society you are a member of, what options do you have for escape? And if you meet someone who sees you, what length do you go to be with them?

The person Juliet meets is often dismissed as the lesser creation. In some ways this is true—this is Juliet’s play. A tragedy that calls itself *Romeo & Juliet* ends with the story of “Juliet and her Romeo”. But what we have in Romeo is not to be instantly dismissed. Here is a boy who has frequent nightmares, and premonitions of death. I gave our Romeo a book of Rimbaud poems. It is a profound instinct to sense you are burning through your life, being driven towards silence. In his poem *Howl*, Allen Ginsberg writes he saw the best minds of his generation become starving, hysterical, naked—although perhaps alongside his observation are minds driven to speak no more. Rimbaud stopped writing poetry, Romeo’s condition overwhelms him to the same silence. But what heightens this tragedy of a boy with dreams of death is one of his final speeches, which has been the point from which we’ve constructed this production. *I dreamt my lady came and found me dead / (Strange dream that gives a dead man leave to think!) / And breathed such life with kisses in my lips / That I revived and was an emperor*. This play is almost a story of resurrection, of a boy who thinks he is doomed to die and is revived until he finds out his resurrection is dead. And it is almost a story of a girl that desires escape and almost achieves it. It is a play about the almost. Not the night of passion, but the brush of the hand, the glance, the coffee after the break-up, driven into the heights of life, death, the world.

These words have made this play seem like tragedy. It is tragedy, but it is also sublime and life-affirming. How gorgeous are these lovers’ words when they can not touch! How joyful is the cowardly clown who wishes to be a man! How beautifully does the Nurse tease the girl she has raised before the afternoon of her wedding. It is a play of tragedy and longing, but it also affirms what it is to live in this world that is both tragic and joyful. It is a supreme achievement of Elizabethan theatre, absolutely popular without sacrificing the quality of its ideas.

To misinterpret another great poet, I invoke Geoffrey Hill. In one of his lectures exploring the oxymoron he mentions the Gospel of Matthew 10:39: He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. The poetic instinct of this verse is present too in *Romeo & Juliet*—every relationship, beat, and the language itself leans into oxymoron. Unlike



a dialectical system, which exists to form resolutions, oxymoron can exist as unresolved contradiction. If you hang life with death, how can one triumph? To moralise is to miss the point, this great work that hangs on unresolved questions: Life, death. Love, violence. All in the air, all full of fight and possibility. And perhaps the implication is that theatre itself is a space for these unresolved questions. I dream of loving someone so much I want to tear them apart, how can this be permissible? This society suffocates me and I want to escape, who would pull me from it? Sometimes I see someone's face and in it I see my life and my death and I am so full of life, so why is it I want to die? This world is full of such joy and ecstasy, I walk onto the street and I feel like Frank O'Hara whistling down Manhattan. I feel like the boundless sea, like a bird in the summer breeze—why is it that amongst this my neighbour is bleeding? These are not problems for philosophy, but for poetry. Here they are in theatre.

I hope you enjoy the show.

Salvador Kent (he/him) is an aspiring Director and Playwright. His work has spanned across theatrical forms and languages. Previous focuses include Clown, Surrealism, Epic, Classical and New Writing. He has directed and assistant directed on work in both English and Spanish.

FAIR VERONA

By Ben Kay

Inspired by Edinburgh's architecture, the construction of our own Verona might have been very different had we been based in another city, or even if we'd developed the design on the other side of the year. Cold, Stone, Grey. The view of the old parliament house from the St Giles Cathedral, the cobblestones, the rain, the faces on the wells on the royal mile, the city provides a nice backdrop for developing a play like this. Our Verona is extremely hot during the day, and extremely cold at night. Because love is warm, death is cold, and this is a play about love and death. In a play of such extremes, a quiet canvas can be useful. I sought to build a world to paint colour onto, inspired by Peter Brook's 1970 production 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', especially for the party scene, with masks pulled from Bosch's 'Garden of Earthly Delights'.

There are two fundamental images of the play that must be celebrated: Romeo looking up at Juliet in the window, and the lovers dead at the end.

The window offers us our high aloft space. Our heaven. A steep staircase sticking out of the side nods to the conventional Elizabethan staging, and a bare, consistent material allows for fluidity between scenes. We open in the town square, with the window as a tower. When Capulet is placed there at the top of the party scene, we enter Gatsbyland, there is a ballroom circling below him. When the party moves on into the orchard, we are in a fruitful garden outside the Capulet household, where we get our image of Romeo looking up at Juliet. The tombstone offers us a base to build from. Our Earth. The design started with one strand of light, I watched Salvador's hands in our first meeting: 'This is a play about love and death' he said, forming a kind of // with his hands. So I drew that and I put the lovers in the centre of it. Inspired by the light over the eyes in 'The Man in The Wall' (2025) this was the core image we built the play from.

Ben Kay (he/him) is an emerging director and designer based in Edinburgh. Through his own distinct style, his work has spanned reflections on Scottishness, Surrealism and Fantasy. He has received multiple nominations including 'Best First-time Director' at the West Lothian Film Festival 2024. He is also the founder of Jaggy Bunnet Productions, an award-winning theatre and film collective focused on finding new ways to support emerging artists in Scotland.

THESE VIOLENT DELIGHTS HAVE VIOLENT ENDS

By Rebecca Mahar

One of the key concepts of this *Romeo and Juliet* has been the inextricability of its intimacy and its violence, each of which can be seen as a form or facet of the other. In this Verona of feud, fury, and the freedom found by young hearts' first explorations, the difference between a kiss and knife is merely temperature. While there is love to be found in our *Romeo and Juliet*, the focus here is on human machination: the naïve wisdom of children, the foolish maturity of their parents, and death as the final result of both love and hate. While there is beauty, there is ugliness; while there is sweetness, there is the sharp of censure; while there is lush imagery, there is stark reality. In holding the three threads of dramaturgy, fight direction, and intimacy direction in this production, I have had the extraordinary privilege and pleasure of a guiding hand across the production in the pursuit of this integration. The commitment of this student company to the visceral nature of our play has been exceptional, as has their willingness to dig deeply into the textual and technical work of performing Shakespeare. Many began this process with little to no experience of working with heightened text and Early Modern language, and none came with experience of the type of stage combat we have asked them to perform. The production you witness tonight is a testament most of all to hard work, and young hearts throwing themselves full-throated into the fray that is this iconic play. Thanks are due across the company, to my fellow collaborators, to the actors, to my redoubtable assistant, and to you: thank you for coming to see this violent delight, and I hope you see its violent end through fresh eyes.

Rebecca Mahar, MFA (she/her) is a PhD Candidate in European Theatre, Certified Intimacy Director with Intimacy Directors & Coordinators, and Advanced Actor-Combatant with the Society of American Fight Directors. Selected recent credits include: Accidental Death of an Anarchist (Bedlam Theatre), I Kissed Batman (Shark Bait Theatre), Grease (Footlights), Julius Caesar (Necessary Cat), Spring Awakening (Theatre Paradok), Dunsinane (Necessary Cat), The Faustus Project (Half Trick Theatre), Romeo & Juliet (Hawaii Shakespeare Festival).



ON MASKS

By Moira Hamilton

The purpose of a theatrical mask is to transform the player's face, while the masquerade mask hides its wearer's identity. The masquerade in *Romeo and Juliet* is, of course, inherently theatrical, so I wanted these masks to do both. They turn everyone into fools, drunks, and snobs with their sculpted faces, but also with their excess of colour and absurdity of design. Juliet's mask in particular forces her to play the role of a sweet young girl which doesn't reflect her feelings. These masks force the elite partygoers to become someone else— to perform— for the length of the party.

Moira Hamilton (she/they) is a Glasgow based graphic artist and theatremaker, and one fifth of Martyr Theatre Company.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Dia Hunter, Moses Brzeski-Reilly, Liz Cowan, and Mae Lai for keeping me sane over this process. I would have expired three weeks ago without you. To Maysan Abdidayim and Lily Goodchild for the many panicked and untimely consultations. To Jane Morgan and Rue Richardson, for your incredible patience and unwavering support. To Beau Wolton, for too much inspiration to name and like half the cast headshots. To Rose, for all of your efforts, but especially your work on the Section 89. To Elle, Rae, and Liz, for your beautiful work on the visuals. To James. To Dia, for your help with the photoshoot, which would have been an insurmountable task without your efforts. To Moses, for your shoes.

From Kai

Thank you to Rebecca Russell, Moira Hamilton, Emre Arsnaelek, David Hewitson, Moses Brzeski-Reilly, Gracie Spencer, James Jennifer Wright, and Caden Scott for your notes on the open rehearsal. To Caden and Courtney for early conversations in Marchmont which set us on our path. To Yash, whose field recordings built our summer nights. To Lisa, for her conversations as an understudy that clarified Lady Capulet. To Elle, whose aesthetics have elevated our work. To Philo for her support in the get-in. And to Eduardo Carrasco, with whom I bought the Apothecary's mask in Gamarra, a market in another country. Thank you for showing me we must draw from the street.

From Salvador

Thank you to Eva Kay, Kerry Kay, Jack Read, Gracie Spencer, Abbie Munro and Keira Mcdonald for painting our set, Frederik Bang for modeling our masks, Yashique Chalil for supplying bird sounds, Queen Margaret University for supplying their spaces, Philomene Cheynet for helping out last minute, John and Gillian Wilkie for letting us turn your kitchen into a workshop, for driving our set to Edinburgh, and for your continued support, this show is not possible without you.

Final thank you to Sarah Paulley, for being the best mentor we could ask for, we have no idea what we would do without you.

From Ben

A close-up photograph showing a person's arms and hands resting on a large, dark, textured sculpture. The person is wearing a white top with lace trim at the sleeves. The sculpture has a rough, stone-like texture and is set against a plain, light-colored background. The lighting is soft, highlighting the textures of both the sculpture and the person's skin.

*idle youth
to all enslaved
through sensitivity
i have wasted my life
oh i long for a time
for hearts to fall in love*

*~Translated from Rimbaud, *Song of the Highest Tower*.*