

REVELATORPRESS

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The Nijinsky Poems



Meq Sparling

**The
Nijinsky
Poems**

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Sparling**



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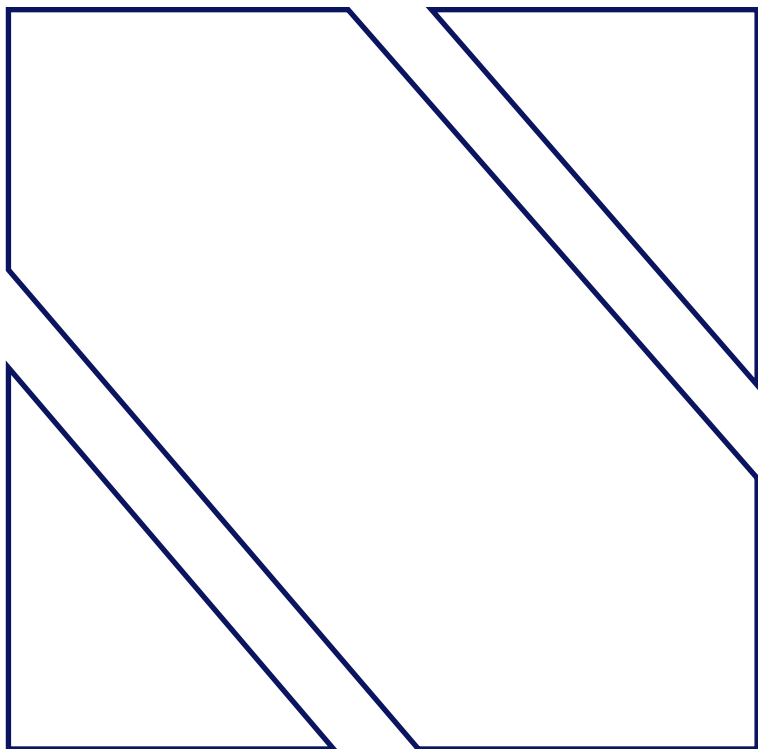
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People have not understood him, and will not understand him if they think. I do not like a bad Nijinsky. I do not like a bad God. I am God. Nijinsky is God.

Waslav Nijinsky





The nervous artist

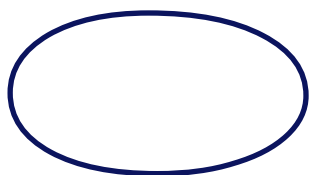
Here.

Two things happened.
The tree spoke to Roethke
socks in the wet leaves
his forehead pressed to its trunk.
Human beings do not understand feelings
(Nijinsky's secret)
Roethke's students waited
then left in the cold morning.
Coatless shoeless Roethke
explained Nijinsky's secret to the Dean
while the doctors were summoned.

There.

Before madness romanced his soul
Nijinsky took flight on stage.
His lover, Sergei Diaghilev, was afraid of oceans—
Nijinsky married Romola in Buenos Aires.
(Human beings do not understand feelings)
In the mental hospital
Nijinsky would insist on
dancing nervously—
the audience understands the nervous artist.
He wrote, *My wife disturbs me because she feels.*





The artist in light

Nijinsky stands in a room of glass—

the laughter of light around him.

Color is absent here,

but makes its absence known.

(In this room his mind is crazed with color.)

Three chairs line the far wall—

the middle facing opposite the others.

His daughter sits in this chair,

swatting playfully at nothing.

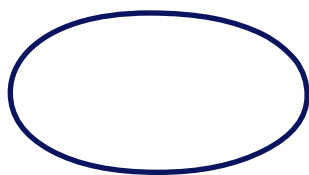
“Papa, a bee, Papa,” she shrieks.

Her sound is a fragile surface here.

Silent Nijinsky stands in the light,

clothed in gravity’s love.





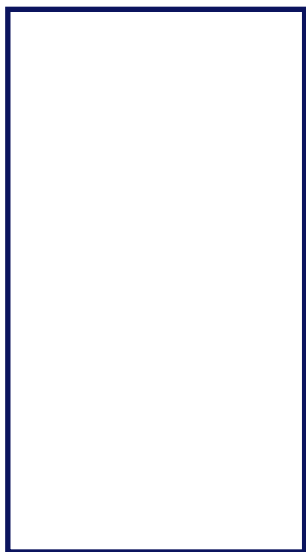
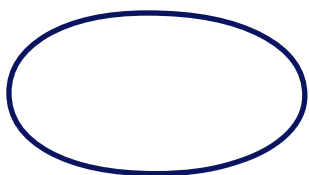
The body of the artist

Nijinsky dancing
was as wistful as a voice in the dark—
or a vase in water, turned inside out.

Nijinsky's spine
was a clapping of hands—
or a flutter of birds, startled and sad.

Nijinsky's feet
were not his own—
he offered them to God.





Nijinsky: A Short Film

We open on a child playing in a garden.

The sun is low and the world is held in amber.

The blonde child with grubby fingers

and a wise smile

digs a hole where the stones go

and sings a rhyming song.

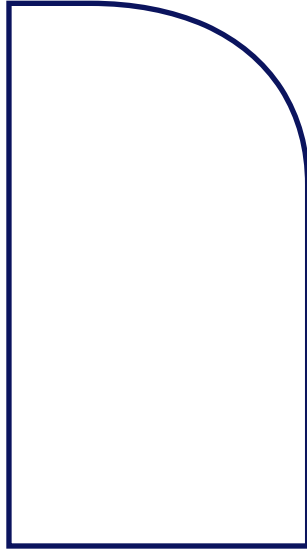
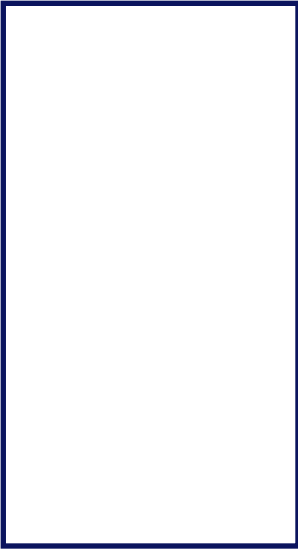
At the call for dinner, the boy runs under a tree

and draws the low branches over his face.

His toes grasp the cool dirt lovingly.

This is Nijinsky.





The poet of madness

Nijinsky could never say
what madness means—
being mad.

I know madness is like
being trapped underwater.

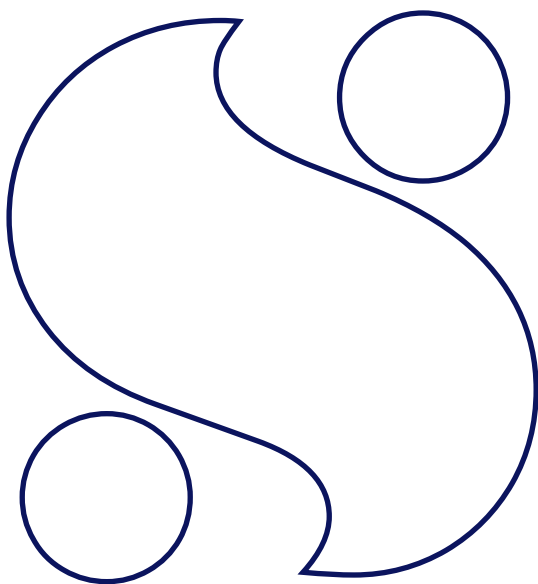
I am not mad but
feel madness in my bones.

I am not mad rather
a nervous artist.
Nijinsky pretended to be nervous.
I must learn to pretend.

Who but a madman would say,
My madness is love for people.
Nijinsky won't admit madness but to say
I lost my balance.

This is not possible for Nijinsky
in the world of God.





Nijinsky on the cross

The architecture of Nijinsky
collapses to the stage,

blood on his feet.

Nijinsky is Christ—

without gender—

pure love—

Son of God.

Audiences said he rose

but never came down.

God does not want me to fall,

he says.

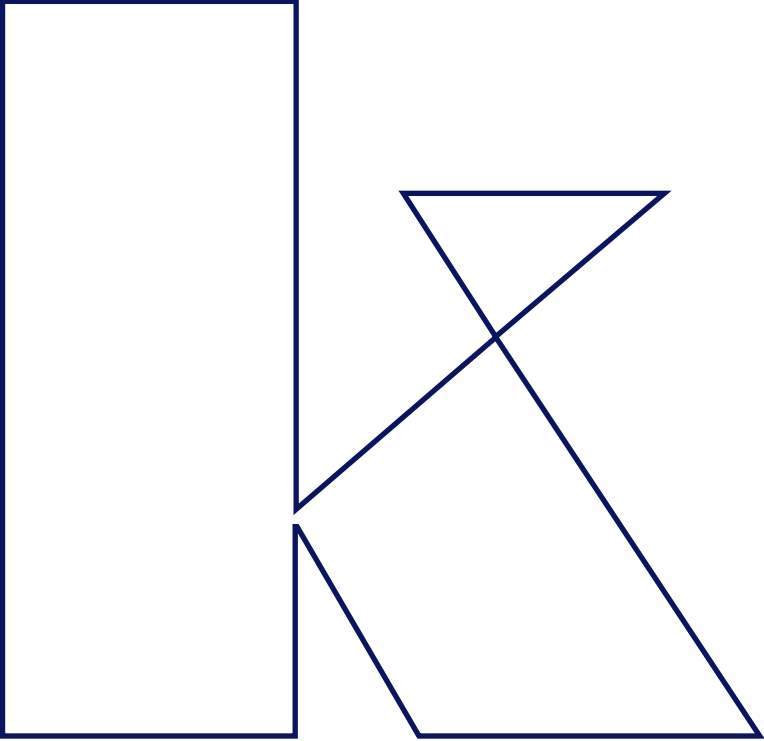
I am what Christ felt,

he says.

I am feeling.

For Nijinsky, to feel is to know, through God.





The paradox of the artist

I was an atheist but soon realized
that one can only understand Nijinsky
in God's universe.

Nijinsky was made by God, is God.

Nijinsky is both mad and not mad.

His writing is deceptively sane.

You or I would not be capable
of such sane writing.

Some say that Nijinsky was sane,
it is the rest of us who are mad.

We are trapped underwater.

Nijinsky is the poet of madness,

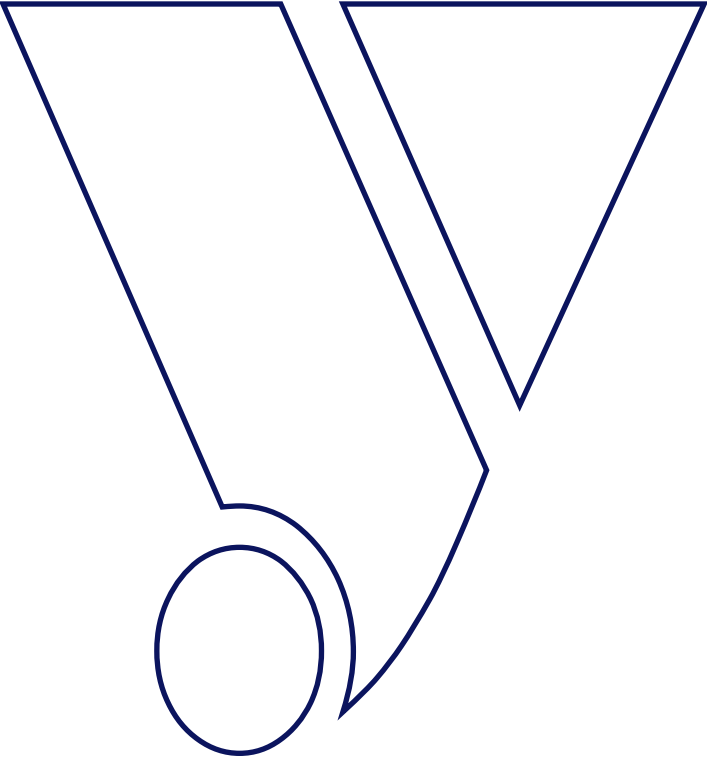
the wise fool,

the jester of God.

Nijinsky loved paradoxes,

being a man who could fly.





A Nijinsky- style confession

I am Nijinsky. I am mad. This will make you angry, therefore I will not tell you. I will say that I am well, read this, we are Love. You won't be convinced. You are the tree. I whispered to you my secret, and you drew it down into your roots. It cannot be recovered.

I am not mad. The good artist is good because he feels. Feeling is the origin of all things, the energy of God's universe. You feel differently than I do. You feel without feeling. You live in a cold, barren landscape, where no trees grow. Where I live the trees dance like Nijinsky—they do not mean to frighten, only to make the artist nervous. But the artist is already nervous—he is afraid he cannot feel.

I cannot control my love for you. It dances like Nijinsky—with no physics, no law. It is as brilliant and scorching as the sun. My skin blisters under its heat. The sun retreats, to a cold, barren landscape beyond the horizon, but the burn still heats my flesh. It numbs me and I want the burn again. Sunrise. Sunset. Sunrise. Sunset. Until I am dead. Nijinsky always confused death with going for a walk.

I have my toe in the abyss, the sun at my back.
I am Love. I am mad. You are the sun.



About the author

Meg Sparling grew up in a small town in northern Michigan. She attended Michigan State University, where she was general editor of *Red Cedar Review*. She has been writing stories since the first grade; in third grade she plagiarized a story about dragons from her teacher, but she promises that everything written since has been completely original. She lives in New York City.



Meg Sparling has crafted a sensitive and insightful revisiting of the life of one of the 20th Century's greatest artists. Her poems are a haunting tribute to a delicate and beautiful man, and a nimble, unerring performance of their own.

