

## **The Crossing on WRTI November 23, 2014 - notes and texts**

The Consolation of Apollo, Kile Smith  
SATB, Crotales, Bass Drum, 35'

Commissioned by Eric Owens for The Crossing, Donald Nally, conductor, The Consolation of Apollo premiered at Princeton University, Wolfensohn Hall, on October 10th and 11th, 2014, and at The Church of the Holy Trinity, Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, on October 12th.

When he approached me with the idea that became The Consolation of Apollo, The Crossing's conductor Donald Nally had been looking for a companion piece to David Lang's The Little Match Girl Passion. They had been performing it since it won the Pulitzer Prize in 2008, and were looking for a work, that, with the Lang, would comprise an evening's concert. So, along with an otherwise unaccompanied chorus I used some of the percussion and, significantly, the context of Christmas from the Lang work.

The spine of Apollo is Nally's vision for some use of the 1968 Christmas Eve broadcast by the crew of Apollo 8, as they became the first astronauts to leave Earth's orbit, circle the moon, and photograph the entire Earth. With the transcript of their communications I interspersed selections from The Consolation of Philosophy by Boethius (480–524).

Philosopher, Christian apologist, and translator of Aristotle, Boethius was one of the greatest thinkers and authors prior to the Middle Ages, combining Classical thought and theology. In the Consolation he considers good and evil, our place in creation and on fortune's wheel, and, at times, Apollo (Phœbus), the mythical charioteer of the sun. A consul to the Ostrogoth Emperor Theodoric, he wrote this while imprisoned by Theodoric, who suspected him of treason, as Boethius attempted to improve relationships with Constantinople. Boethius was executed shortly after completing the Consolation.

The Consolation is not overtly Christian and mentions God, as a higher power, only briefly. In this it is a cousin to the Seneca texts I set in The Waking Sun, also composed for The Crossing. In my selections from Boethius, I attempted to highlight his appreciation of myth, but also his judgment of it as inadequate. The compelling translation/adaptation attributed to King Alfred has the rhythmic and imaginative power of Beowulf. It and the lyrical James and Cooper translations provide textured counterpoint to the Apollo 8 transmissions.

That 1968 Christmas Eve television broadcast famously (and in some quarters, infamously) included the recitation by the astronauts of the first ten verses of Genesis, "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth...." This text is

mixed together with the prosaic chatter among the crew and Houston as they position the craft for what are now the iconic photos of Earth.

The setting of the prose was the tallest musical hurdle for me, as I wanted to convey the informal, even chaotic quality of the speech without sacrificing lyricism. The model that offered a solution was the sung Passion, where three singers of different ranges portray Christ, the narrator, and the crowd. I assigned Commander Frank Borman to the basses, Command Module Pilot James Lovell to the tenors, and Lunar Module Pilot William Anders to the altos. Astronaut Ken Mattingly, on the support team in Houston, is voiced together by the altos, tenors, and basses. The distance and low-quality sound of the transmission was something I wished to approximate. I was unwilling to use percussion for this purpose mainly because of the length of the text, as percussion quickly tires the ears. After rejecting some vocal techniques, I decided to employ the sopranos in a halo of pre- and post-echoes of the lower three voices.

In the Genesis reading the lower three sometimes switch this sonic role with the sopranos. Again, a hurdle in Genesis 1 is the length of a not obviously musical text. One technique I used—interesting to me, anyway, as I don't believe I've used it before—is bitonality, or the sounding of two tonal centers at the same time, the idea coming from the description of God's dividing the light from darkness, and the firmament from the waters. At one point the women are in one key, the men in another; or I combine the sopranos and basses in one key, and the altos and tenors in another.

The bass drum drives the rhythm here and there, and the crotales are mostly simple—even simplistic—bell-like heralds of the astronauts, resolving into an evocation of the sincerest of wishes for a Merry Christmas for all. This, I believe, is the emotional center of the piece.

### The Consolation of Apollo

1. Thou may'st know, if thou wilt notice  
from Metres of Boethius, XXXI. Adapted by King Alfred the Great (849-899) from  
The Consolation of Philosophy by Boethius (480-524), and translated by Walter  
John Sedgefield, 1900.

Thou may'st know,  
That many creatures  
Fare over earth  
With gait and colour  
And aspects also  
Queer and common.  
With all their body  
No wings them help;  
Nor pace the earth,

if thou wilt notice,  
of various kinds  
with unlike motions,  
quite diverse,  
of endless kinds,  
Some creep and crawl  
bound to the ground;  
on feet they walk not,  
as was them appointed.

Some on two feet	fare o'er the ground,
Some are four-footed;	some in flight
Wing 'neath the clouds.	Yet each creature
Is drooping earthward,	stooping downward,
On the ground looking,	longing for earth.
Man only goeth	of all God's creatures
With gait upright,	gazing upwards.
This is a token	that he shall turn
His trust and his mind	more up than down,
To the heavens above,	lest he bend his thoughts
Like beasts earthward.	It is not meet
That the mind of a mortal	should remain below
While his face he holdeth	up to heaven.

## 2. Yes, it's beautiful

The crew of Apollo 8, December 24th, 1968

Borman: How's that steam pressure, Bill?

Anders: Good.

Lovell: Frank.

Anders: It isn't even boiling yet. Yes, we just started.

Borman: Here it comes!

Anders: Okay.

Borman: Oh boy!

Lovell: Get a good shot of her?

Borman: Yes, see it?

Lovell: Well, keep the camera there. Keep the camera.

Anders: Here it comes. Here it comes. But you're not on yet. You got it...you got to do something. Pitch up or yaw.

Borman: Yaw right?

Anders: Yaw right.

Lovell: Oh, Jesus.

Lovell: Houston, Apollo 8.

Anders: Roll her a little bit. Roll her a little bit to the...to the right.

Lovell: Here, you want me to fly it just to come a...

Anders: That one's got it, the roll. Yes, yes. It's the roll that's got it. Roll right, if you can.

Lovell: We're rolling.

Anders: Come on, gang.

Lovell: We're going to radial out. Are we...you got her coming up? You see her, Frank?

Borman: Yes, it's beautiful.

## 3. Wings are mine

The Consolation of Philosophy, Book 4, Song 1. Boethius, trans. H. R. James, 1897

Wings are mine; above the pole  
Far aloft I soar.  
Clothed with these, my nimble soul  
Scorns earth's hated shore,  
Cleaves the skies upon the wind,  
Sees the clouds left far behind.  
Soon the glowing point she nears,  
Where the heavens rotate,  
Follows through the starry spheres  
Phœbus' course, or straight  
Takes for comrade 'mid the stars  
Saturn cold or glittering Mars;  
Thus each circling orb explores  
Through Night's stole that peers;  
Then, when all are numbered, soars  
Far beyond the spheres,  
Mounting heaven's supremest height  
To the very Fount of light.  
There the Sovereign of the world  
His calm sway maintains;  
As the globe is onward whirled  
Guides the chariot reins,  
And in splendour glittering  
Reigns the universal King.  
Hither if thy wandering feet  
Find at last a way,  
Here thy long-lost home thou'lt greet:  
    'Dear lost land,' thou'lt say,  
    'Though from thee I've wandered wide,  
Hence I came, here will abide.'  
Yet if ever thou art fain  
Visitant to be  
Of earth's gloomy night again,  
Surely thou wilt see  
Tyrants whom the nations fear  
Dwell in hapless exile here.

#### 4. The Sea of Tranquility

Anders: Houston.

Lovell: Houston. Go ahead, go ahead.

Mattingly: Loud and clear and an initial look at your systems are good.

Anders: Houston, Apollo 8. Over.

Mattingly: We've got a picture, Apollo 8.

Anders: Roger. We've got the T...Roger. We've got the TV...

Lovell: Roll...roll left.  
Anders: Huh?  
Borman: Roll left a little, can you?  
Lovell: Yes.  
Borman: Did he say it was a good picture?  
Anders: How's the picture look, Houston?  
Mattingly: Loud and clear.  
Anders: The TV look okay?  
Mattingly: That's very good.  
Lovell: Welcome from the Moon, Houston.  
Borman: And the world.  
Mattingly: Thank you.  
Anders: Is this our landing site we're going over now?  
Lovell: Yes, this is our landing site right down here.  
Anders: We're now going over our...  
Lovell: Approaching our landing site.  
Anders: ...approaching one of our future landing sites...  
Lovell: Right now.  
Anders: ...selected in this smooth region to...  
Lovell: Called the Sea of Tranquility.

#### 5. While the bright sun Metres of Boethius, VI

While the bright sun Gleaming in heaven, Over the world For their light is nought, When set against When softly bloweth The wind 'neath heav'n, The flowers of the field, But the stiff storm-wind, From out of the north-east, The rose's beauty! The spacious ocean Till strongly heaving Alas, that in the world Firm and lasting	most clear is beaming, gloom enwrappeth all other bodies; nothing at all, the sun's great brightness. from south and west then soon wax fain to be able. when it strongly bloweth how soon it nippeth By the northern blast is helpless spurned it striketh the beach. nothing wareth long on this earth!
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#### 6. In the beginning

Borman: Hey, why don't we start reading that thing, and that would be a good place to end it.  
Lovell: No, we've got to go into it very nicely. Why don't we...as we go into sunset...  
Anders: Right.

Lovell: ...or is it sunrise? This is sunrise, yes. We're approaching lunar sunrise.  
Anders: We are now approaching lunar sunrise, and for all the people back on Earth, the crew of Apollo 8 has a message that we would like to send to you.  
In the beginning, God created the Heaven and the Earth. And the Earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and God said, Let there be light. And there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good, and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.  
And God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters. And let it divide the waters from the waters." And God made the firmament and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament. And it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.  
And God said, "Let the waters under the Heavens be gathered together into one place. And let the dry land appear." And it was so. And God called the dry land Earth. And the gathering together of the waters called he seas. And God saw that it was good.  
And from the crew of Apollo 8, we close with good night, good luck, a Merry Christmas and God bless all of you...all of you on the good Earth.

## 7. The stars shine

Consolation, Book 3, Song 1, trans. W. V. Cooper, 1902

The stars shine with more pleasing grace when a storm has ceased to roar and pour down rain. After the morning star has dispersed the shades of night, the day in all its beauty drives its rosy chariot forth. So thou hast looked upon false happiness first; now draw thy neck from under her yoke: so shall true happiness come into thy soul.

The Little Match Girl Passion (2008), David Lang  
chamber choir, plus 4 voices (SATB) each playing simple percussion, 35'

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize in Music, 2008, The Little Match Girl Passion was co-commissioned by the Carnegie Hall Corporation and the Perth Theater and Concert Hall. It was premiered by Paul Hillier and Theatre of Voices (in the original version for four voices) in October 2007. The choral version was commissioned by the National Chamber Choir of Ireland (Paul Hillier, conductor).

Of this work, David Lang writes: "I wanted to tell a story. A particular story — in fact, the story of The Little Match Girl by the Danish author Hans Christian Andersen. The original is ostensibly for children, and it has that shocking combination of danger and morality that many famous children's stories do. A poor young girl, whose father beats her, tries unsuccessfully to sell matches on the street, is ignored, and freezes to death. Through it all she somehow retains her Christian purity of spirit, but it is not a pretty story.

What drew me to *The Little Match Girl* is that the strength of the story lies not in its plot but in the fact that all its parts—the horror and the beauty—are constantly suffused with their opposites. The girl's bitter present is locked together with the sweetness of her past memories; her poverty is always suffused with her hopefulness. There is a kind of naive equilibrium between suffering and hope. There are many ways to tell this story. One could convincingly tell it as a story about faith or as an allegory about poverty. What has always interested me, however, is that Andersen tells this story as a kind of parable, drawing a religious and moral equivalency between the suffering of the poor girl and the suffering of Jesus. The girl suffers, is scorned by the crowd, dies, and is transfigured. I started wondering what secrets could be unlocked from this story if one took its Christian nature to its conclusion and unfolded it, as Christian composers have traditionally done in musical settings of the Passion of Jesus.

The most interesting thing about how the Passion story is told is that it can include texts other than the story itself. These texts are the reactions of the crowd, penitential thoughts, statements of general sorrow, shock, or remorse. These are devotional guideposts, the markers for our own responses to the story, and they have the effect of making the audience more than spectators to the sorrowful events onstage. These responses can have a huge range—in Bach's "Saint Matthew Passion," these extra texts range from famous chorales that his congregation was expected to sing along with to completely invented characters, such as the "Daughter of Zion" and the "Chorus of Believers." The Passion format—the telling of a story while simultaneously commenting upon it—has the effect of placing us in the middle of the action, and it gives the narrative a powerful inevitability. My piece is called *The Little Match Girl Passion* and it sets Hans Christian Andersen's story *The Little Match Girl* in the format of Bach's *Saint Matthew Passion*, interspersing Andersen's narrative with my versions of the crowd and character responses from Bach's *Passion*. The text is by me, after texts by Hans Christian Andersen, H. P. Paulli (the first translator of the story into English, in 1872), Picander (the nom de plume of Christian Friedrich Henrici, the librettist of Bach's *Saint Matthew Passion*), and the Gospel according to Saint Matthew. The word "passion" comes from the Latin word for suffering. There is no Bach in my piece and there is no Jesus—rather the suffering of the Little Match Girl has been substituted for Jesus's, elevating (I hope) her sorrow to a higher plane." —David Lang

1. Come, daughter (paraphrasing Bach's No. 1: Opening Chorus, Kommt, ihr Töchter)  
Come, daughter  
Help me, daughter  
Help me cry  
Look, daughter  
Where, daughter  
What, daughter  
Who, daughter  
Why, daughter

Guiltless daughter  
Patient daughter  
Gone

2. It was terribly cold

It was terribly cold and nearly dark on the last evening of the old year, and the snow was falling fast. In the cold and the darkness, a poor little girl, with bare head and naked feet, roamed through the streets. It is true she had on a pair of slippers when she left home, but they were not of much use. They were very large, so large, indeed, that they had

belonged to her mother, and the poor little creature had lost them in running across the street to avoid two carriages that were rolling along at a terrible rate. One of the slippers she could not find, and a boy seized upon the other and ran away with it, saying that he could use it as a cradle, when he had children of his own. So the little girl went on with her little naked feet, which were quite red and blue with the cold.

3. Dearest heart (paraphrasing Bach's No. 3: Chorale, Herzliebster Jesu)

Dearest heart

Dearest heart

What did you do that was so wrong?

What was so wrong?

Dearest heart

Dearest heart

Why is your sentence so hard?

4. In an old apron

In an old apron she carried a number of matches, and had a bundle of them in her hands. No one had bought anything of her the whole day, nor had any one given her even a penny. Shivering with cold and hunger, she crept along; poor little child, she looked the picture of misery. The snowflakes fell on her long, fair hair, which hung in curls on her shoulders, but she regarded them not.

5. Penance and remorse (paraphrasing Bach's No. 6: Alto Aria, Buss' und Reu')

Penance and remorse

Tear my sinful heart in two

My teardrops

May they fall like rain down upon your poor face

May they fall down like rain

My teardrops

Here, daughter, here I am

I should be bound as you were bound

All that I deserve is

What you have endured

Penance and remorse

Tear my sinful heart in two

My penance



My remorse  
My penance

6. Lights were shining

Lights were shining from every window, and there was a savory smell of roast goose, for it was New-year's eve- yes, she remembered that. In a corner, between two houses, one of which projected beyond the other, she sank down and huddled herself together. She had drawn her little feet under her, but she could not keep off the cold; and she dared not go home, for she had sold no matches, and could not take home even a penny of money. Her father would certainly beat her; besides, it was almost as cold at home as here, for they had only the roof to cover them, through which the wind howled, although the largest holes had been stopped up with straw and rags.

Her little hands were almost frozen with the cold.  
Her little hands were almost frozen with the cold.

7. Patience, patience!

Patience.  
Patience!

8. Ah! Perhaps

Ah! perhaps a burning match might be some good, if she could draw it from the bundle and strike it against the wall, just to warm her fingers. She drew one out—"scratch!" how it sputtered as it burnt! It gave a warm, bright light, like a little candle, as she held her hand over it. It was really a wonderful light. It seemed to the little girl that she was sitting by a large iron stove, with polished brass feet and a brass ornament. How the fire burned! and seemed so beautifully warm that the child stretched out her feet as if to warm them, when, lo! the flame of the match went out, the stove vanished, and she had only the remains of the half-burnt match in her hand.

She rubbed another match on the wall. It burst into a flame, and where its light fell upon the wall it became as transparent as a veil, and she could see into the room. The table was covered with a snowy white table-cloth, on which stood a splendid dinner service, and a steaming roast goose, stuffed with apples and dried plums. And what was still more wonderful, the goose jumped down from the dish and waddled across the floor, with a knife and fork in its breast, to the little girl. Then the match went out, and there remained nothing but the thick, damp, cold wall before her.

9. Have mercy, my God (paraphrasing Bach's No. 39: Alto Aria, Erbarme dich)

Have mercy, my God.  
Look here, my God.  
See my tears fall. See my tears fall.  
Have mercy, my God. Have mercy.  
My eyes are crying.  
My heart is crying, my God.

See my tears fall.  
See my tears fall, my God.

10. She lighted another match

She lighted another match, and then she found herself sitting under a beautiful Christmas-tree. It was larger and more beautifully decorated than the one which she had seen through the glass door at the rich merchant's. Thousands of tapers were burning upon the green branches, and colored pictures, like those she had seen in the show-windows, looked down upon it all. The little one stretched out her hand towards them, and the match went out. The Christmas lights rose higher and higher, till they looked to her like the stars in the sky. Then she saw a star fall, leaving behind it a bright streak of fire. "Some one is dying," thought the little girl, for her old grandmother, the only one who had ever loved her, and who was now dead, had told her that when a star falls, a soul was going up to God.

11. From the sixth hour (from the Gospel of St. Matthew, 27:45)

In the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour she cried out:  
Eli, eli.

12. She again rubbed a match

She again rubbed a match on the wall, and the light shone round her; in the brightness stood her old grandmother, clear and shining, yet mild and loving in her appearance. "Grandmother," cried the little one, "O take me with you; I know you will go away when the match burns out; you will vanish like the warm stove, the roast goose, and the large, glorious Christmas-tree." And she made haste to light the whole bundle of matches, for she wished to keep her grandmother there. And the matches glowed with a light that was brighter than the noon-day, and her grandmother had never appeared so large or so beautiful. She took the little girl in her arms, and they both flew upwards in brightness and joy far above the earth, where there was neither cold nor hunger nor pain, for they were with God.

13. When it is time for me to go (paraphrasing Bach's No. 62: Chorale, Wenn ich einmal soll scheiden)

When it is time for me to go  
Don't go from me  
When it is time for me to leave  
Don't leave me  
When it is time for me to die  
Stay with me  
When I am most scared  
Stay with me

14. In the dawn of morning

In the dawn of morning there lay the poor little one, with pale cheeks and smiling mouth, leaning against the wall; she had been frozen to death on the last evening of

the year; and the New-year's sun rose and shone upon a little corpse! The child still sat, in the stiffness of death, holding the matches in her hand, one bundle of which was burnt. "She tried to warm herself," said some. No one imagined what beautiful things she had seen, nor into what glory she had entered with her grandmother, on New-year's day.

15. We sit and cry (paraphrasing Bach's No. 68: Closing Chorus, Wir setzen)

We sit and cry

And call to you

Rest soft, daughter, rest soft

Where is your grave, daughter?

Where is your tomb?

Where is your resting place?

Rest soft, daughter, rest soft

Rest soft

Rest soft

Rest soft

Rest soft

You closed your eyes.

I closed my eyes.

Rest soft

The Waking Sun (2011), Kile Smith

The following notes (with texts) are drawn from a series of blogs by the composer; Kile's full notes can be found at [www.kilesmith.com](http://www.kilesmith.com). The Waking Sun is my attempt to understand Stoicism. When Donald first asked me to participate in The Crossing's Seneca Sounds project, my immediate thought was No. I have always puzzled over why a non-Christian, say, would bother composing a piece with Christian themes, so as a Christian I thought it presumptuous to take on this patron of Stoicism, Seneca the Younger.

The more I read his work, however, the more attracted I became. He preaches—and a lot of times, it is preaching—a nobility beneficial to anyone. There are parallels to some aspects of Christianity, as others have noted, in the writings of this man living (c.3 B.C.–65 A.D.) at the time of Christ. But I have little interest in setting something just because it's similar to something else. I wanted to find the thing itself. Donald himself gave me the key when he told me what he found compelling in Seneca. He wrote, "This, to me, is what Stoicism is – it's an image from my childhood. It's snowing hard and terribly windy and it has already snowed previously and then ice has fallen on that snow, so the ground is very difficult to walk on because your boots snap through the ice layer and crunch down at varying depths. And I

am standing at the back door of our house and I need to go out and feed the rabbits and I know that it's bitter out there – ice and snow in your face, no balance – but I have to do it, so I open the door, pause, then throw myself into it. And, suddenly I'm halfway between the back door and the cages – I've taken maybe twenty difficult steps and it's taken a full minute to do so, and I stop. I stop, and I balance against the wind and I let it have me for a moment. It's just me, and the snow, and the waiting rabbits and the brightness of snow that makes a veil through which I can't see the cage. And I realize that I like it. I like being there. I like having this journey and the stinging in my face and the little goal ahead and the stopping and letting it all happen as it did before I was in it - all around me, not noticing me. And, I listen to the snow hitting my jacket and the ground and I wonder how something so light can make such a roar.”  
I remembered the snow and those boots often during the year I've been writing this.

I kept to his many plays, away from the essays and letters, and zeroed in on the choruses. Here I found Seneca speaking to me, through their reflection on the action and the state of the characters. After a long winnowing process, I ended up with six sections that eloquently depict our condition and Stoicism, as I understand them.  
The final two sections hint at what I consider to be Seneca's “answer” to our condition (although he'd shrink from such a word, I'm sure): Take full responsibility without fear, be motivated by love. This is how I read it.

Music, however, teaches nothing, answers nothing. If there is any value in *The Waking Sun*, it will come from the window opened into that otherness waiting patiently for each of us while we bother with our daily existence. Seneca is this particular window. I've tried to peek through and sing what I saw.

The text is from the 1917 English translation of the plays by Frank Justus Miller.

1. The gates have sounded  
The gates have sounded, and he himself, with none to guide and sightless, gropes his way. —Oedipus

In whose kingdom shall you die? — Troades

This is the text that jumped out at me first; from the moment I read it I never wavered from having it open *The Waking Sun*. Over everything else I wavered, deleted, restored, and re-ordered. Not this one. It not only states our condition elegantly, it sums up the struggle to

compose this.

I had a vague idea of city gates closing at the end of the day, and what sound might accompany that—blown ram’s horns, perhaps, the sound of gate machinery? I wasn’t sure. So I cast about for a modern example, and a sound came to me. It doesn’t parallel the situation in which Oedipus finds himself, but the combination of emergency and finality got my attention; it’s a railroad crossing, when the arms come down and the bell clangs. And what a bell! I had a specific one in mind, found an audio example online, identified the pitch, overtones and subtones (which are quite audible), and revoiced the notes into the opening string chords. This may be the only time I’ve ever copied something into music like this. When I hear these notes, I understand the alert to hopelessness Oedipus must be experiencing.

It seems to me that the great question Stoicism poses is the Troades quote, “In whose kingdom shall you die?” Up until the last week of composing, I had planned to repeat this at the end of the piece. But by the time I got there, the repetiti on sounded too pedantic. The childish sing-song setting of these words is straight out of my childhood; when we played one kind of ball or another in the street and would have to clear when a car approached, we’d sing “Car, car, candy bar, smoke a big cigar” to this interval. I don’t know the origin of that rhyme, but it made sense at the time.

## 2. Sport, youth

Sport, youth, ring out your songs. —Medea

Along with you a troop of Bacchanals in Edonian dance beat the ground, now on the peak of Mount Pangaeus, now on the top of Thracian Pindus; now from among the women of Cadmus comes a maenad, impious comrade of Bacchus, with sacred fawn-skins wrapped around her loins. Now their hearts are maddened, and now their hair is flowing; and now, after rending Pentheus limb from limb, the Bacchanals, their bodies freed from the frenzy, look on their infamous deed as though they know it not. — Oedipus

[Mount Pangaeus, at the apex of the Pindus Mountains in Thrace (now northeast Greece) held special place for the fun-loving Edonians who once carried a wine-banning king to the crest and had him pulled apart by his own horses; Pentheus, also an abstainer, suffered a similar fate, mistaken for a wild animal by the frenzied Bacchanals and torn apart.]

The Bacchanalian moral of unfettered passion leading to catastrophe is known in many forms, including this one with both sensual and religious subtexts. Seneca repeatedly warns against excess of all

kinds, and the ecstatic killing of Pentheus by his mother and her Dionysian followers is among the most perfervid. The dance rhythm I bring in is a medieval danse royale.

This movement is in D Dorian, with C major juxtaposed against it; but at “rending” the music goes into straight C major, the only time it happens, bright C major and C major seventh chords. It feels somehow like coming home. I thought that the gravity of the scene would be expressed best if we felt it as the Bacchanals (who are completely satisfied at this point) and not as judges.

### 3. That wanton, smiling boy

That wanton, smiling boy, how true he aims his shafts! The wound he deals has no broad front, but eats its way deep into the bone. His madness glides into the marrow; with creeping fire he ravages the veins. His arrows strike the lowest depths and pierce the ocean throng of Nereids; they cannot ease their heat with all the water in the sea. He kindles the fierce flames of youth and wakes again, in worn-out age, extinguished fires; he smites maids' breasts with unknown heat, and bids the very gods leave heaven in borrowed forms on earth to dwell. He claims as his own all nature; nothing is exempt. — Phaedra

This description of Cupid is not the boyish stereotype we normally hold. The text I gleaned from Phaedra was much too long, and I found myself more than usually unwilling to delete any of it. But as often happens, the editing decisions became much easier once some music started occurring to me. That happened one evening after work. I walk through the Suburban Station Concourse to my train, and there was a busker performing where I walk by – a bluegrass singer accompanying himself on the banjo. I never saw him there before, nor have I seen him since. But his presence that day was timely, as his wailing and dun-diddy, dun-diddy rhythm provided my entry into this text. The words started forming themselves into couplets, and the piece was off and running.

The rhythm reminded me of something else, and it took a while for it to come to me. It was the rhythm guitar track from the 1971 hit “Treat Her Like a Lady” by the Cornelius Brothers & Sister Rose. The dotted rhythm on beat two kick-starts the backup vocals, “Treat her like, you got to, got to treat her like...” and is an overlay of irony to the ravaging described by the chorus in Phaedra.

### 4. Weary, with empty throat, stands Tantalus

Weary, with empty throat, stands Tantalus; above his guilty head

hangs plenteous food; on either side, with laden boughs, a tree leans over him and, bending and trembling beneath its weight of fruit, makes sport with his wide-straining jaws. He tries no more to touch, he turns away his eyes, he tightly shuts his lips; behind clenched teeth he bars his hunger. Then the whole grove lets down its wealth, and the ripe fruits beckon from above. As his hands stretch toward the mocking gift, the whole harvest of the bending wood leaps up high, out of reach. Then comes a raging thirst, harder to bear than hunger. The poor wretch hurls himself at waves that motion to his lips, but they elude his grasp. Deep from the whirling stream he drinks but dust. — Thyestes

The idea of writing for Baroque instruments came up because the original concept was for *The Waking Sun* to be paired with *Membra Jesu nostri* of Dietrich Buxtehude. While that programming changed, the concept for this piece stayed the same, so a couple of textural gestures came to mind. Somewhere in *The Waking Sun* I wanted to have a violin duet. Tantalus provided the perfect opportunity. The two violins encapsulate a bit of text-painting, the image of the two trees bending down over Tantalus, offering fruit lower and lower, then springing up before he can reach it. The duet is a strict canon at the third below, with each iteration slightly longer than the one before.

From Tantalus comes tantalize, of course, and one could hardly invent a more apt myth than this. Punished by the gods for stealing their ambrosia, Tantalus is bound in this place, and cannot escape. He is tempted above and below by attractions to his flesh. The music is static for the most part, mirroring his helplessness. Voluptuous harmonies grow with his hope, then evaporate.

##### 5. A king is he

A king is he who has no fear; a king is he who naught desires. Such kingdom on himself each man bestows. — Thyestes

I don't know if you can have a fuguing tune [originally a mid-18th century American sacred music form] without the fuguing part, but if you can, "A king is he" is that piece. I started to write the imitative section that should follow the homophonic opening, but was dissatisfied with every idea. So I simply repeated the opening, with minor variations in the voices, and peeled away the accompaniment. I put in most every "wrong" voice-leading I could think of: doubled major thirds, tripled octaves, directisms, parallelisms, and clashes of various sorts. This was to show, I suppose, how fearless, as a king, I was.

This was originally to be the last section of *The Waking Sun*, with “In whose kingdom shall you die?” appended at the end. But it more and more started to sound like a sermon. Sermons have their place; but I don’t think they have a place in music; music attempting to put forward a position ceases to be music. So the next section grew in importance as an entry into the most appealing aspect, to me, of Seneca’s thought.

6. While on such beauty the lover gazes

While on such beauty the lover gazes, her cheeks suddenly glow with rosy blush. Snowy wool turns crimson thus when bathed in purple flood; so gleams the waking sun when the shepherd, wet with the dew of the dawn of the day, considers it. — Medea

While the text of “A king is he” would make a fine summation, it started to ring hollow as the ending for this work, especially since it appealed so un-stoically to my own ego (see no. 5). “While on such beauty” argues for the other side of desire, not for the elimination of it.

What really convinced me was recently seeing a performance of the final duet of Monteverdi’s *The Coronation of Poppea*. Soft and haunting, “Pur ti miro” (I gaze at you, I possess you) is utterly mesmerizing with its simple four-note ground bass and sweet, biting counterpoint. It is even more remarkable as the ending of an entire opera. That Seneca plays such an important role in *Poppea* was another connection.

All the instruments but the theorbo are silent in this finale, so when the theorbo drops out, the choir is unaccompanied for about the last six minutes of the piece. The ostinato continues in a bass voice, and the choir eventually divides into twelve parts. Each voice repeats its own short phrase, leaves, then re-enters, until all repeat the words of the title.