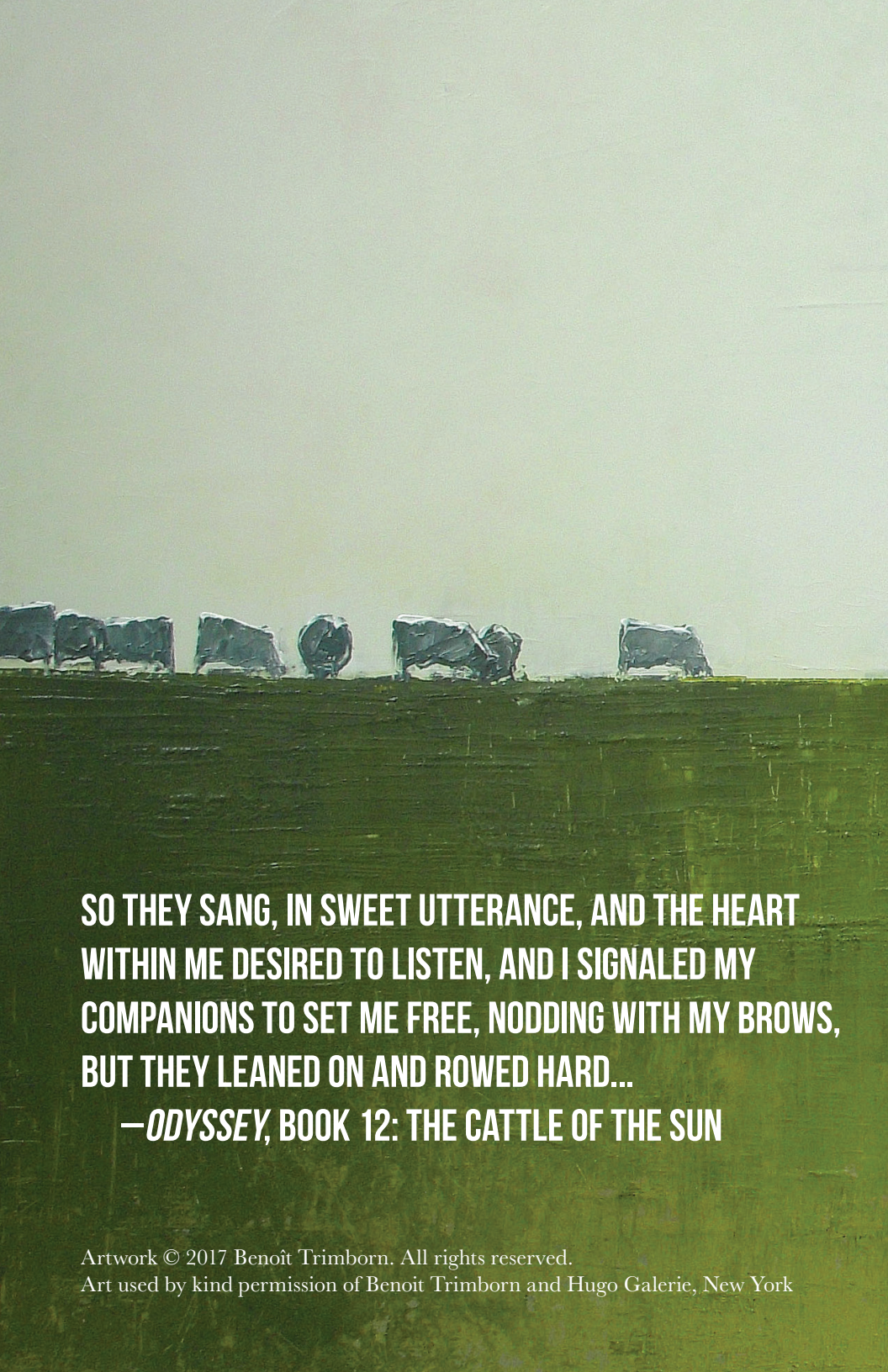


An abstract painting with a textured surface. The top half is a solid, vibrant orange. Below this is a horizontal band of complex, layered textures in shades of blue, black, white, and yellow. The bottom half of the painting is a solid, textured green. The overall style is expressive and modern.

**THE CROSSING
THE MONTH OF MODERNS 2018**

B. SIMMONS



**SO THEY SANG, IN SWEET UTTERANCE, AND THE HEART
WITHIN ME DESIRED TO LISTEN, AND I SIGNALLED MY
COMPANIONS TO SET ME FREE, NODDING WITH MY BROWS,
BUT THEY LEANED ON AND ROWED HARD...**

—*ODYSSEY*, BOOK 12: THE CATTLE OF THE SUN

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Like a mirrored reflection of last year's Month of Moderns, which focused on The Other, this year we turn inward to a series of life journeys. In **Month of Moderns 1: a house** we visit a number of our 'selves' – the caring self and the needing self; the spiritual self and the political self. This special evening, focusing primarily on lesser-known works of David Lang along with a world premiere by Ellis Ludwig-Leone, is a study in what love – be it for another, a god, or for humanity – drives us to do and to be.

We refine that theme in **Month of Moderns 2: Voyages**, focusing on the most basic of our relationships: the love between two people. This concert is a rich and unusual event in which two composers, Benjamin C. S. Boyle and Robert Convery, set the same text, twenty-five years apart; Hart Crane's *Voyages* is a masterpiece of 20th-century literature – an exhilarating and devastating journey through a passionate, obsessive, and doomed intimacy we all crave and fear.

Finally, with **Month of Moderns 3: The Arc in the Sky** we remove any generality and focus on one person's voyage, that of poet Robert Lax as he grapples with form, rhythm, music, meaning, and spirituality. Kile Smith's concert-length world premiere, *The Arc in the Sky*, is in three parts: Jazz, Praise, Arc; the journey is implied as our own season's odyssey of reflection and exploration comes to a close.

We do not have to be Homer to question how complex, beautiful, and confounding a life's journey may be. We have only to look at ourselves and then ask, in art, for some clarity. Odysseus had clarity when he asked his men to avoid **The Cattle of the Sun**. But clarity for them – not unlike in our lives – was confounding; they lost themselves in hunger for the animal that has given, quietly, to us for millennia. When I was a child, I was fascinated by how sad cows' eyes seemed. I wondered if they were lonely. I no longer wonder that; they are animals, like us, and of course they are. I thought we might make a season about that.

Donald
for The Crossing

THE MONTH OF MODERNS 2018

The Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill

8855 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia

Month of Moderns 1: a house

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Saturday, June 9 at 8pm

Pre-concert talk at 7pm in the Chapel

Month of Moderns 2: Voyages

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Sunday, June 17 at 4pm

Pre-concert talk at 3pm in the Chapel

Month of Moderns 3: The Arc in the Sky

Page 15

Saturday, June 30 at 8pm

Pre-concert talk at 7pm in the Chapel

Come. Hear. Now.

www.crossingchoir.org

The Crossing

Katy Avery

Nathaniel Barnett

Jessica Beebe

Julie Bishop

Kelly Ann Bixby

Karen Blanchard †

Steven Bradshaw

Colin Dill

Micah Dinger

Robert Eisentrout

Ryan Fleming

Joanna Gates

Dimitri German

Steven Hyder

Michael Jones

Heather Kayan 3

Heidi Kurtz 1

Maren Montalbano

Rebecca Myers

Rebecca Oehlers

Daniel Schwartz

Rebecca Siler

Daniel Spratlan

Elisa Sutherland

Daniel Taylor 2

Jason Weisinger 3

Donald Nally, conductor

John Grecia, keyboards

† Karen Blanchard's performance on June 17 is made possible by a generous grant from Beth Van de Water, a board member of The Crossing, in memory of Hank Van de Water.

1 June 17 and 30

2 June 17

3 June 9 and 30

MONTH OF MODERNS 1: a house

Saturday, June 9 at 8pm

The Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill

with

Guillaume Combet, Alexandra Cutler-Fetkewicz, Rebecca Harris,
and Carlos Rubio, violin

Amy Leonard and Petula Perdikis, viola

Mimi Morris-Kim and Nellie Smith, violoncello

Heather Miller Lardin, contrabass

Ted Babcock, percussion

PROGRAM

The Fruit of Silence (2013) Pēteris Vasks

a house (2016) David Lang
east coast premiere

Lincoln (2018) Alex Berko
brief pause

statement to the court (2010) Lang

Who What Where When Why (and a few other questions) (2018)
world premiere Ellis Ludwig-Leone

Commissioned by Tour Resource Consultants and Maury Schulte for The Crossing and Donald Nally, with additional support from Anne and Dennis Wentz

just (after song of songs) (2014) Lang

Please join us for a reception, welcoming composers Alex Berko and Ellis Ludwig-Leone, on the front lawn of the church following the concert.

a house, statement to the court, and just (after song of songs) were recorded this week for release on Cantaloupe Records.

This concert is being recorded for broadcast by our partner WRTI, 90.1 FM, Philadelphia's Classical and Jazz Public Radio Station.

NOTES

All texts for this program may be found at www.crossingchoir.org/mom1

a house

words and music by David Lang (b. 1957)

a note from the composer:

a house was commissioned by Northwestern University to honor the opening of their new music building, the Ryan Center for the Musical Arts. This is a big responsibility for a piece of music, and I started thinking about my piece as a kind of benediction, and as a wish for the future, for all the good work that could now happen within this new environment.

I remembered the proverb: Through wisdom is a house built, and by understanding it is established; and by knowledge are the chambers filled with all precious and pleasant riches. That seemed very appropriate for the opening of a new building at a university, since, ideally, the ‘precious and pleasant riches’ with which the chambers would be filled would be knowledge itself.

I wondered if I could mirror in my piece the building of a building, if I could lay out my bricks and my mortar, and then painstakingly assemble them into chambers filled with riches. I found nineteen different translations of the proverb, each slightly different. I separated out only the individual words necessary to be able to create all nineteen versions and I arranged them alphabetically – these are the bricks of my building. I then divided each of the nineteen versions into their smaller phrases, arranging them alphabetically as well. Of course, the goal of education is wisdom. Luckily for me, and thanks to the alphabet, it is the goal of my text, as well.

a house was commissioned by Northwestern University, Henry and Leigh Bienen School of Music, and was premiered by the Bienen Contemporary/Early Vocal Ensemble, Donald Nally, director, Sunday April 17, 2016, at Mary B. Galvin Recital Hall, Ryan Center for the Musical Arts.

Lincoln

music by Alex Berko (b. 1995)

Lincoln was commissioned by The Cathedral Choral Society and conducted in its premiere by Donald Nally on Sunday, March 4, 2018, at the Washington National Cathedral.

a note from the composer:

Lincoln is a reflection on the power of the individual. It explores the idea that

change is not linear but gradual, and infused with an extreme amount of personal courage. This non-linear nature of change is embedded into the structure of the composition, for the setting of the text was crafted in a way that would reflect the overall affect of the poetry itself. Through the reiteration of each line of text, it is almost as though the repetition empowers the individual to continue on to the next line. It isn't until the very end that the entire poem is recited in its purest form, ending the composition on a feeling of unity and togetherness.

statement to the court

words and music by David Lang

statement to the court was commissioned by The Crossing, Donald Nally, conductor, with funding from The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage through the Philadelphia Music Project, and was premiered on June 27, 2010, at The Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill at The Month of Moderns.

a note from the composer:

For various different reasons, when Donald Nally contacted me and asked if I would write a work for his choir, The Crossing, I got it into my head that I wanted to do something political. I remembered back in my lefty days reading a very passionate and intelligent speech by Eugene Debs, the pioneering 19th-century American Socialist and founder of the International Workers of the World, in which he addresses the court that has just found him guilty of sedition for speaking out against American participation in World War I. What I love about this speech is that it is both critical of the political world that Debs lives in and at the same time optimistic about it. He sees the problems around him and yet is confident that through dedication things can be improved. I wanted to try to capture this duality of feeling in my setting of the text – the clear-eyed recognition that things are not what they should be, and the hopefulness that, with hard work, things can be made a lot better.

statement to the court is dedicated to ASCAP's Fran Richard, with whom I have been talking politics for over 30 years.

Who What Where When Why (and a few other questions)

words and music by Ellis Ludwig-Leone (b. 1989)

a note from the composer:

The text for this piece is comprised entirely of questions submitted to me by friends and acquaintances in response to the prompt: "What are five questions you ask yourself on a given day?" I received about 150 questions from 30 sources, ranging from the profound to the very mundane.

The next task was to arrange them into a libretto. I was struck by the searching, almost spiritual quality of so many questions – little snapshots of peoples’ lives – all jumbled together. I sorted them into five categories: who, what, when, where, and why. I liked how this five-part organization echoed the familiar structure of an ordinary Catholic Mass, with its Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei.

As I was writing, I was reminded of a quote from James Baldwin: “You must understand that your pain is trivial except insofar as you can use it to connect with other people’s pain.” As I arranged and set the anxieties and curiosities of my friends and family, I felt like I was allowed access to something sacred and personal. My hope in writing this piece is to celebrate and combine these little moments in order to find something shared and universal.

just (after song of songs)

words and music by David Lang

a note from the composer:

just (after song of songs) is a setting of a text I made by finding certain things in the Song of Songs. The original text is of course the most passionate and erotic of the ancient Jewish books, and it is always strange to encounter it in the Bible. In 2008 I wrote a choral piece called *for love is strong*, in which I made a similar text from the Song of Songs, trying to use the words to see through the relationship between the man and the woman in the story to the relationship between Man and God. According to Jewish tradition the Song of Songs is a metaphor for our passion for the Eternal, so the words themselves become very important.

One thing that has always interested me about the text is that the man and the woman in the Song of Songs have attributes, they notice things about each other, they own things, they have features that are desirable. In a love between people this would be no surprise. In a love between Man and God, however, that might mean that in this text are clues to the nature of God’s own attributes, and a record of how they might attract us.

For my text I listed everything personal or owned that is attributed to the man and to the woman. To clarify who is speaking I started every phrase of his with ‘just your’ and every phrase of hers with ‘and my.’ It is interesting that in a text about a love that is shared there are only seven instances of ‘our.’

just (after song of songs) is dedicated to my friends Amy Podmore and Frank Jackson.

MONTH OF MODERNS 2: Voyages

Sunday, June 17 at 4pm

The Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill

with

Natasha Colkett, Alexandra Cutler-Fetkewicz, Abigail Fayette, Rebecca Harris,
Margaret Humphrey, and Christof Richter, violins
Petula Perdikis and Daniela Pierson, violas
Tom Kraines and Mimi Morris-Kim, violoncellos
Tim Ressler, contrabass

PROGRAM

Voyages, Cantata No. 2, Op. 41 (2018)
world premiere

Benjamin C. S. Boyle

- I. Avowal: Bind us in time
- II. Seascape: Above the fresh ruffles of the surf
- III. Pairings: And yet this great wink of eternity
- IVa. Aria: This tendered theme of you
- IVb. Aria: And so, admitted through black swollen gates
- V. Descent: Meticulous, infrangible, and lonely
- VI. Chorale: Draw in your head

Commissioned with the generous support of Pamela Prior and Debra Reinhard

intermission

Voyages (1994)

Robert Convery

Please join us for a reception, welcoming composers Benjamin C. S. Boyle and Robert Convery and announcing our 2018-19 season, on the front lawn of the church following the concert.

This concert is being recorded for broadcast by our partner WRTI, 90.1 FM, Philadelphia's Classical and Jazz Public Radio Station.

NOTES

All texts for this program may be found at www.crossingchoir.org/mom2

Voyages, Cantata No. 2, Op. 41

music by Benjamin C. S. Boyle (b. 1979)

a note from the composer:

Voyages is dedicated to Lindsey Reinhard.

A note from the conductor:

When Benjamin wrote to ask if I knew Hart Crane's *Voyages*, suggesting it as the text for his new work, commissioned by President Deb Reinhard (then Board President) and her wife Pam Prior (now Board Treasurer), I laughed.

Yes.

I spent a significant amount of time in the nineties obsessed with all things Hart Crane, his fantastic imagery, strictly disciplined structure, free-wheeling language, and complex world of metaphor. It held such great appeal for me, as I felt my own Romantic impulses breaking under the pressure of a desire for an ascetic aesthetic – my journey toward the austere, out of the florid. For me, it started with Crane's epic poem *The Bridge*, in which he acknowledges his great debt to his predecessor, his unknowing mentor. Crane's homage is not so much laudatory as it is an imagined intimacy, a luminous devotion, love.

Recorders ages hence, yes, they shall hear
In their own veins uncanceled thy sure tread
And read thee by the aureole 'round thy head
Of pasture-shine, Panis Angelicus!

Yes, Walt,

Afoot again, and onward without halt, —
Not soon, nor suddenly, — no, never to let go
My hand

in yours,

Walt Whitman —

so —

From *The Bridge*, I moved backward in time to Crane's first volume, *White Buildings*, where I discovered *Voyages*. So enamored by this cycle, I asked Bob Convery to set one of its poems, the third, in which, after trekking through breathtaking symbols and alliterative wonders – “infinite consanguinity,” “whirling pillars and lithe pediments,” “the silken skilled transmemberment of song” – Crane concludes with a startlingly simple supplication:

Permit me voyage, love, into your hands...

Bob also fell in love with *Voyages* – so much so, he suggested setting the entire six-poem cycle. This was an uncalculated gift, the first major work to be inspired by one of my choirs (in this case, that of West Chester University).

Twenty-two years later Benjamin mentioned Crane’s cycle, and, after my laugh, I paused. The idea of a new setting brought to mind how the world has changed since 1994 when Bob finished his *Voyages*. How I have changed. How our perceptions can change. I thought of what I’ve learned about relationships, and what I have yet to learn. How we can share a perception and yet miss subtly nuanced differences that make us unique. How often we find our ‘feeling’ isn’t completely understood. (Peter Schaffer’s searing, allegorical line comes to mind, “What use is grief to a horse?”) The Crossing has been exploring these differences in perception for a number of years now; how we view the emotional lives of others, how we consider The Other, how one Voice delivers the Voice of another. How we perceive emotional contexts can be the binding force of a community. It can also be what tears it apart. Hearing the same words inflated by very different composers of diverse perspectives, yet equal investment in this poetry, is an experiment and a rich opportunity that holds the potential for unforeseeable insight. We’ve found thousands of ways to sing “Lord, have mercy.” What are two ways of finding the music in, “the bottom of the sea is cruel?” Or, imagining the sound world of the mystical,

In this expectant, still exclaim receive
The secret oar and petals of all love.

Crane was a complex person, and his words, like him, are simultaneously mesmerizing and confounding. It’s easy to look at his pages and want to ‘translate them,’ to explain what each oblique metaphor and dissonant cluster may mean, to define the many obscure words. But, Crane lies at a curious place in American poetry, a Modernist working in lyricism, a strict Architect with metric discipline and prosaic gilding. Sounds, and what they evoke in us, are his concern. He was purposeful in his pursuits.

The motivation of the poem must be derived from the implicit emotional dynamics of the materials used, and the terms of expression employed are often selected less for their logical (literal) significance than for their associational meanings. Via this and their metaphorical inter-relationships, the entire construction of the poem is raised on the organic principle of a “logic of metaphor,” which antedates our so-called pure logic, and which is the general basis of all speech, hence consciousness and thought-extension.

Thus, we may not know exactly what a line means, but we recognize the feeling:

while ribboned water lanes I wind
Are laved and scattered with no stroke
Wide from your side

We sense we've been there and are returning. The Romantic pull and the Modernist friction come together to describe our journey.

And, indeed, *Voyages* is a journey – perhaps a number of journeys. Or, the same one looked at from various angles – how passion or compassion or hurt change from morning to night. Narrative, he said, is not his concern. The six poems of *Voyages* do not follow the course of a relationship linearly; instead, each poem is like a snapshot of a relationship in its entirety, as if zooming in and out on the erotic impulse, the fear, the companionship, the disappointment. We know this voyage has ended, we feel it from the first poem, and we sense a certain deepening resignation as the cycle proceeds, as if the memory of passion and pain is eroded by the waves that are thundering their warning in the opening lines. His words seem to capture the erosion of an instinct to love and, in this way, the cycle does work its way toward an inevitable conclusion.

Indeed, in the end, what is left is not the lover or the love, not the sea or the journey; it is the one thing that will, for Crane, always be there, even after he is gone: Words – the means by which he attempts to figure out all that has come before.

The imaged Word, it is, that holds
Hushed willows anchored in its glow.
It is the unbetrayable reply
Whose accent no farewell can know.

So, too, music, “whose accent no farewell can know,” tells its own stories. It leads us on journeys of unexpected clarity – surprising revelations found in an abstraction. A Language. An Art. Ancient and New. Here, two composers, one poem. A sea of perception and receiving, in which, perhaps, once again we will recognize ourselves and be grateful for whatever the days, and the nights, bring.

–Donald, May 2018

Voyages

music by Robert Convery (b. 1954)

a note from the composer:

Voyages was commissioned by Donald Nally and West Chester University in West Chester, PA. The work, for unaccompanied choir, is in six movements that correspond to the six poems of Hart Crane's *Voyages*. The six movements comprise a set of variations, in that the thematic material for each movement is drawn from its preceding movement. The six movements travel in a third degree harmonic progression beginning in A major and coming full circle at the end of the sixth movement. This cycle of poems by Hart Crane lives in the motion of a kaleidoscopic theme: the search for love and the self-knowledge attained in that search. The musical considerations for *Voyages* were made to correspond to that same kaleidoscopic center, the ever-growing changeability in understanding love, the single theme of Hart Crane's diversely symbolic cycle of poems.

MONTH OF MODERNS 3: The Arc in the Sky

Saturday, June 30 at 8pm

The Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill

PROGRAM

The Arc in the Sky (2018)
world premiere

Kile Smith

I. Jazz

1. why did they all shout
2. there are not many songs
3. Cherubim & Palm-Trees

II. Praise

4. I want to write a book of praise
5. The light of the afternoon is on the houses
6. Psalm

III. Arc

7. Jerusalem
8. I would stand and watch them
9. The Arc

Commissioned by The Crossing and Donald Nally

Please join us for a reception, welcoming composer Kile Smith, on the front lawn of the church following the concert.

This concert is being recorded for broadcast by our partner WRTI, 90.1 FM, Philadelphia's Classical and Jazz Public Radio Station.

NOTES

All texts for this program may be found at www.crossingchoir.org/mom3

The Arc in the Sky

music by Kile Smith (b. 1956)

a note from the composer:

The Arc in the Sky, on texts of Robert Lax (1915–2000), is a 65-minute pilgrimage for unaccompanied choir. Some know of Lax only through Thomas Merton's autobiography *The Seven Storey Mountain*, so to discuss *The Arc in the Sky*, I should say something about him for those who have not yet been acquainted with his work.

Lax and Merton were close friends from their meeting at Columbia University, writing for the student-run *Jester*. Lax made an immediate and life-changing impression on Merton, playing a decisive role in Merton's turnaround from debauchee to monk. In his book he describes Lax as "a potential prophet," an Elijah, a Hamlet, a Moses to whom words came with difficulty:

A mind full of tremendous and subtle intuitions, and every day he found less and less to say about them, and resigned himself to being inarticulate. In his hesitations, though without embarrassment or nervousness at all, he would often curl his long legs all around a chair, in seven different ways, while he was trying to find a word with which to begin. He talked best sitting on the floor.

Lax had a "natural, instinctive spirituality, a kind of inborn direction to the living God," and an "affinity for Job and St. John of the Cross," Merton wrote. (The spirit of *The Arc in the Sky*, if not its music, is similar to *Canticle*, my 2016 setting of *The Spiritual Canticle* by St. John of the Cross.) Merton and Lax hung out at jazz clubs together. They wrestled with philosophy and religion and writing, in New York City and at Lax's family's cottage in Olean in western New York. The two pacifists tried to work through their place on a planet hurtling, in the late 1930s, toward another world war. They had in common "the abyss that walked around in front of our feet everywhere we went." Then, walking to Greenwich Village on Sixth Avenue one spring night,

Lax suddenly turned around and asked me the question:

"What do you want to be anyway?"...

"I don't know; I guess what I want is to be a good Catholic."

"What do you mean, you want to be a good Catholic?"

The explanation I gave was lame enough...and betrayed how little I had really thought about it at all.

Lax did not accept it.

"What you should say" – he told me – "what you should say is that you want to be a saint."

A saint!... “How do you expect me to become a saint?”

“By wanting to,” said Lax, simply.... “All that is necessary to be a saint is to want to be one.... All you have to do is desire it.”

Merton’s journey led him from that conversation to his Catholic baptism and eventually to a Trappist monastery. Lax himself converted from Judaism to Catholicism in 1943. He wrote for the *The New Yorker* and *Time* magazine, moved to Hollywood for a brief go at scriptwriting, wrote poetry, and produced *The Circus of the Sun*, a bright gem of a book about the Cristiani family of acrobats. He traveled with the circus for months, learning to juggle and to clown. He would move from New York City to Olean and back, to Marseilles, to the Greek island of Kalymnos and, finally, to sacred Patmos, the island to where the apostle John had been exiled, where he had written *The Revelation*.

Lax experimented with line in his writings, but mostly, with how to speak. Michael N. McGregor, author of *Pure Act: The Uncommon Life of Robert Lax*, quotes Lax: “All of this was to please myself. I certainly wasn’t trying to invent a new form and startle anyone with it. I don’t like startling people.”

He wrote some of the first minimalist poetry: one word, one syllable, or even one letter to a line. Friends saw to it that some of it was published. He corresponded with readers and with friends such as Merton and Jack Kerouac, who called him “one of the great original voices of our times ... a Pilgrim in search of beautiful innocence.” Richard Kostelanetz wrote that Lax is “among America’s greatest experimental poets, a true minimalist who can weave awesome poems from remarkably few words.”

He was called a hermit but was not. The many poetry and spiritual devotees who looked for him on Kalymnos or Patmos only had to ask the first resident they met for “the poet,” and his house would be pointed out. They sought him for his wisdom, quietude, and advice, and received those with a humor that was always bubbling to the surface. He observed fishermen, sponge divers, the sea, and the sky, and wrote poems about them, poems of stunning simplicity. James Uebbing, in an alumni appreciation for Columbia, wrote, “Lax is essentially simple and devoid of secrets.”

This is what struck me. As soon as I read Lax, I knew I wanted to set his words to music. The nine texts I chose worked themselves into three sections: Jazz, Praise, and Arc.

Almost from at first I knew I would open the work with **why did they all shout**. Jazz played a big part in Lax’s early life, and in his poetry. It was a metaphor of life, an intentional, communal improvisation with others and with God. The ecstasy of being carried along is what I wanted to capture, the feeling not so much of a performance, or of listening to a performance, but of performers

and listeners together being caught up in something bigger than them all. The first movement doesn't sound like jazz, not really, but a few features echo it: close and parallel harmonies, a kind of syncopation through changing meters and twos-against-threes, and, from time to time, a walking bass.

Jazz harmonies – augmented triads, 13th chords, and flat 9ths abounding – come to the fore in **there are not many songs**. There's an abandonment to the idiom (or one corner of it that's dear to me), reflecting a giving of oneself over to the “one song.” If I were to use jazz, I decided, I would go all the way in and see what happened.

Cherubim & Palm Trees is by far the longest of the texts. I set the declamatory words conversationally, as I felt this was the voice of Lax, intimate and humorous, speaking to his good friend Jack Kerouac. (I was encouraged to this view by delightful talks with Lax's niece Marcia Kelly, by the author of *Pure Act*, Michael McGregor, and by Paul Spaeth, director of the library and the Robert Lax archives at St. Bonaventure University in Olean.) I lightened the approach with straightforward syncopation and with music that returns as a chorus. A solo quartet separates itself from the choir; the movement and first section crescendo to “the courts of the house of God.”

I want to write a book of praise serves as a tonic at the beginning of the second section, while summing up Lax's work wonderfully. It recalibrates attention from the panoramic temple to the little and common things. I use a recognizably “religious” syntax for the men to sing in, a chant.

Women then sing **The light of the afternoon is on the houses**, a collection of common images that prompt illumination. I am always text-painting, on a small or large scale, in my attempt to elicit emotions through music. What colors the movement, even the opening images filled with heat, is “the laughing speech.” In this swaying waltz, parallel harmonies are again voiced closely.

Ending this section, **Psalm** confesses love and thankfulness while facing the coexisting states of remembrance and non-remembrance, a fuzziness echoed in the tonality. Alternating between G-sharp minor and B-flat mixolydian (five sharps and three flats), the music is further muddied by see-sawing pitches, such as Ds and D-flats, As and A-flats, Es and E-sharps. These play the role of the blues third – heard in blues, jazz, and folk music, it's a note slid or bent between the minor and major third. In classical music (or on any keyboard instrument) this in-the-cracks note has been approximated by Bartók and others by playing both notes at the same time: a “crushed” third. In Psalm they're alternated or overlapped. “Cross relations” such as these are avoided in traditional counterpoint but here they mirror the text's simultaneous proclaiming and questioning.

From **Jerusalem**, “for none would hear her” was an early possible title for *The Arc in the Sky*. This almost unbearably moving poem was one of the first I chose to set.

Lax returns to his theme of searching, and with it, to dichotomies held comfortably at the same time. Descending and ascending, ruin and beauty, and solitude in the midst of the city are all here. The nonchalance of the first line is darkened as more and more flats are introduced into E-flat major. Presented, removed, and presented again, they presage the triumphant yet lamenting chorus in G-flat major: “for lovely, ruined Jerusalem / lovely sad Jerusalem / lies furled / under cities of light.”

Two texts showing the heart of Robert Lax become the destination for this pilgrimage. **I would stand and watch them** is all observation, innocence, and wisdom. The idea of using canons seemed appropriate for the unstudied sound I wanted. Each phrase is a new canon, always at the unison but for two exceptions near the end. I alter voice entrances and the number of repetitions, depending, as always, on the sense of the text. This brings up the issue of the last two words, “we mend.”

Composers know that repeating text alters its meaning. The driving force for me is always the emotional impact of the music, but the risk is in changing the meaning to something beyond what the author intended. Usually I avoid that, but not always. For instance, I repeat “there” at the start of **there are not many songs**, once or twice eliciting a “there, there,” as a mother might say to soothe her child. That was not Lax’s intention. Similarly, at the end of **I would stand and watch them** the words “we mend” mean we mend the nets. But in repeating “we mend” over and over I change the meaning from a transitive to an intransitive verb: it is not only the nets, but we ourselves who are mended. Lax may have intended that – I don’t know – but I hope he won’t mind.

Without an inkling of how I would (or could) set it, I knew I wanted **The Arc** to end the work. I did know that I wanted to capture the feeling of awe in the simplest things, and return to some form of the ecstasy with which *The Arc in the Sky* opened. The result turned out to be broad brush-strokes of simple chords, as if this one defining moment of clarity – this vision – was a painting. Not only do we view it whole, but we are creating it as the succession of details are slowly laid on the canvas, as our eyes take in the images of arc, sky, and sea, separately and together.

The chorus forms into two choirs. They alternate blocks of chords, complementing and striking sparks off each other. The use of two choirs gives the singers places to breathe within these long corridors lined with pillars of sounds. Dynamics and ranges adjust during the procession to the end, creating an emotional commentary, a drama. The pilgrimage closes near where it began, in awe, in ecstasy, seeing in an instant yet slowly pondering the immensity of the vision, there, right in front of us.

My thanks to Marcia Kelly and Paul Spaeth for their time, their openness to this project, and for permitting the use of these texts, and to Michael McGregor for his

invaluable insights by correspondence and in one long, generous, conversation. I highly recommend his *Pure Act* to anyone wanting to know more about Robert Lax. I am indebted to The Crossing and to Donald Nally. As always, their faith in me by asking for another work opens my heart in gratitude. I am humbled by their trust, and astonished by the magnitude of their talent and artistry. I thank my wife Jackie for her patience through my long hours, weeks, and months of composing in a little room away from everyone, but then again, it was she who introduced me to the works of Robert Lax, so without her there would not be *The Arc in the Sky*.

—Kile Smith, May 2018

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

WE ARE GRATEFUL...

...for the generosity and creativity of our artists and the composers who create for them;

...to our board and staff for supporting our vision;

...as we close our thirteenth season, for our audience, an amazing community of curious, intuitive, diverse, supportive, innovative, and caring friends; they have created The Crossing;

...for providing our home, The Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill; Rev. Cindy Jarvis, Minister; Daniel Spratlan, Director of Music; Esther Cole, Church Administrator; Ken Lovett, Associate Director of Music; and the entire staff and congregation;

...for providing percussion equipment, The Curtis Institute of Music and Ted Babcock;

...for housing our artists and assisting in various ways throughout the year, Rev. Cindy Jarvis, David and Rebecca Thornburgh, Jeff and Liz Podraza, Beth Vaccaro, Rebecca Siler, Linda Lipscomb, Corbin Abernathy and Andrew Beck, James Reese, Colin Dill, David Newmann and Laura Ward;

...for generously providing and organizing our post-concert receptions, Beth Van de Water, Heidi Kurtz, and Ellie Sutherland

...WE THANK YOU

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WHAT'S UP NEXT?

Big Sky Choral Initiative

our annual residency in the mountains of Big Sky, Montana

With a focus on making art that is invested in the amazing landscapes of the United States, we ask questions about our relationship to those mountains, plains, cities, and coasts. This year we embark on a new artistic journey with composer Michael Gordon and filmmaker Bill Morrison, bringing our art to the mountains, and making new art unique to Montana.

July 30 – August 10

The Warren Miller Performing Arts Center, Big Sky, Montana
visit bigskyconservatory.org for updates and more information

Of Arms and the Man

a Ted Hearne world premiere

co-commissioned by The Park Avenue Armory and The Crossing

at The Park Avenue Armory

with a special performance at The Philadelphia Fringe Festival

Doris Kareva's words, "Our flags are wafting in hope and grief," are the starting point for this choral recital that explores themes of nationalism and war, victory and loss, as we navigate our own journeys in joy and despair.

Sunday, September 16 @ 5pm

FringeArts, Philadelphia

Wednesday and Thursday, September 19 and 20 @ 7:30pm

Park Avenue Armory, NYC

COMING JUNE 2019

Aniara: fragments of time and space

a choral-theater work over three years in the making
in collaboration with Klockriketeatern and composer Robert Maggio

Our largest project to date. Based on the novel by Nobel Prize-winner Harry Martinson, *Aniara* follows the physical and emotional voyage of a group that has left a dying earth; thrown permanently off course, their spaceship is headed toward the constellation Lyra, forever.

Robert Maggio, *composer*
Dan Henriksson and Donald Nally, *artistic directors*
Antti Silvennoinen, *Beijing Opera performer and choreographer*
Erika Turunen, *costumes*
Joonas Tikkanen, *designer*
Nick Tipp, *sound designer*

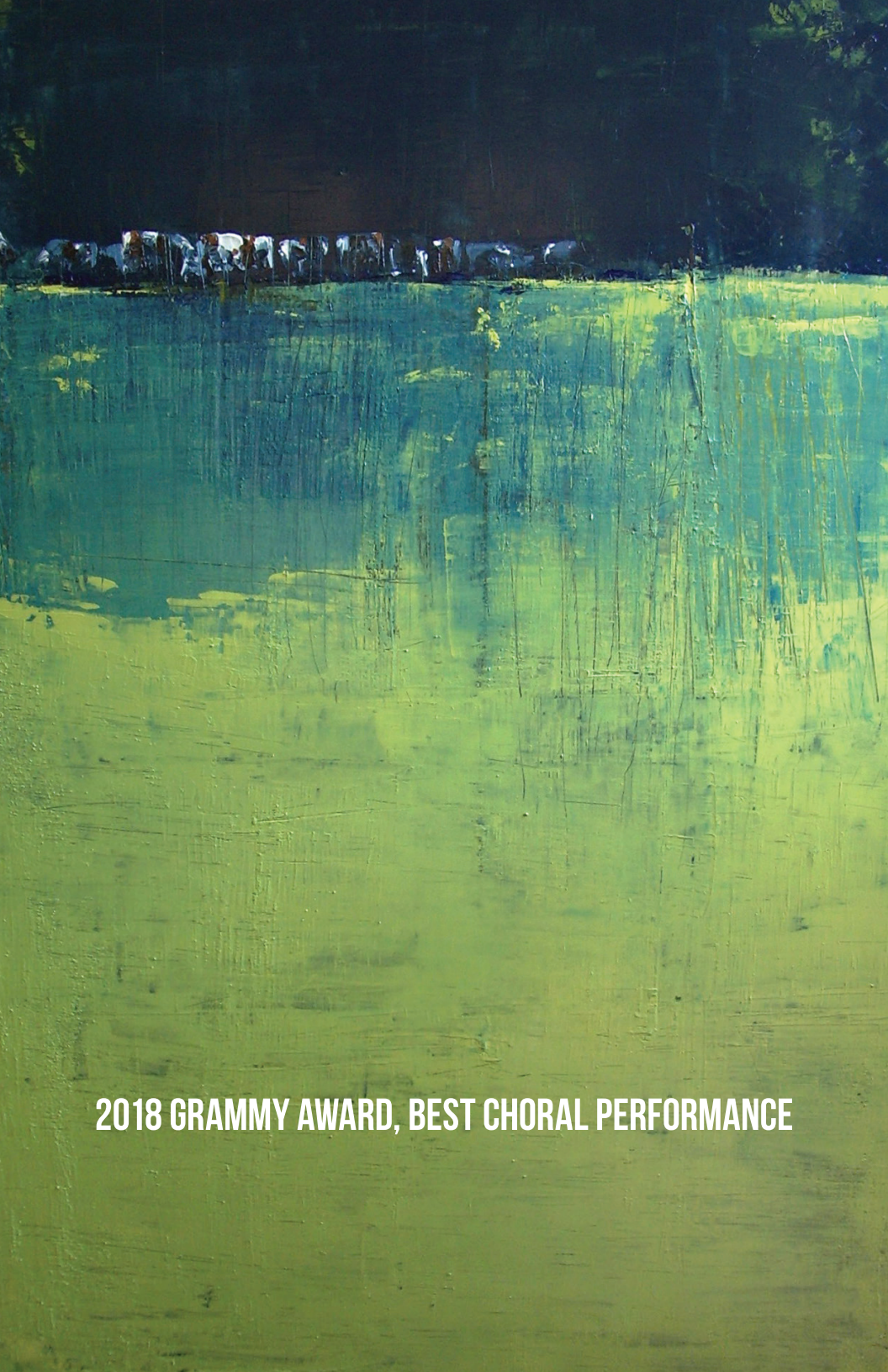
Thursday and Friday, June 20 and 21, 2019 @ 7:30pm
Saturday, June 22, 2019 @ 3pm and 8pm
Sunday, June 23, 2019 @ 4pm
Christ Church Neighborhood House, Philadelphia



Major support for *Aniara* has been provided by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage.



Klockriketeatern is a nomadic theater company led by artistic director Dan Henriksson that collaborates with new partners and artists from various countries, in different spaces, working in several languages, and continuing stories about contemporary vagabonds and trails outside the norms of societies. Established in 1991 in Helsinki, their name is drawn from Harry Martinson's *Vägen till Klockrike (The Road)*.



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