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Welcome! From the Cleveland Chamber Choir

The Cleveland Chamber Choir welcomes you to the beautiful sanctuaries of Fairmount Presbyterian Church and First Congregational Church of Akron for *The Personal Muse* programs. We have been so fortunate to enjoy your presence at our concerts this year—it has been a remarkable fourth season of choral music making! Our thought-provoking and vibrant performances of established choral masterpieces along with our commitment to being a vehicle for new music through commissions and premieres has earned critical acclaim—in response to our most recent concerts in March, Timothy Robson of Clevelandclassical.com wrote, “Director Scott MacPherson and the Choir gave extraordinary and virtuosic performances... Cleveland Chamber Choir’s performance in this concert puts them at the top of the heap of Cleveland choral ensembles.” As a part of our outreach in the community and our dedication to “good” in the greater Cleveland area, we donated a large percentage of the donations from our free September concerts to the Northeast Ohio Veterans Association. Similarly, following our *Holiday Treasures* concerts, a percentage of the donations supported caroling at the Cleveland Clinic Children’s Hospital where we visited several pediatric units and sang for the children. It was a moving experience for us all. In four short years with at least 21 concert performances and annual student composer workshops at Cleveland State University, we have become more than a professional choir—we are a family of singers, board members, and audience lovers of choral music. The Cleveland Chamber Choir: *More than Music!*

~~Scott MacPherson, Artistic Director

Welcome! From the Cleveland Composers Guild

The Cleveland Composers Guild is delighted to collaborate with the Cleveland Chamber Choir in this presentation of interesting and exciting choral works by our members. The Guild is one of the nation’s oldest new music organizations and has had over 200 composer members in its more than fifty-year history. We have worked with many organizations since our inception but few who have so quickly established a reputation for presenting outstanding performances of new (and older) music. Of all those present today, however, we would like to thank you most of all. Whether you are attending your first new music concert, you have lost count, or somewhere between, we applaud you for embracing the unfamiliar, opening yourself to new possibilities, and keeping music live. Thank you and enjoy this special concert.

~~Joseph Hollings, Chair



The Cleveland Chamber Choir is supported in part by the residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture

The Cleveland Composers Guild is supported by the Bascom Little Fund, The Cleveland Foundation, and Cuyahoga Arts & Culture



Long Time Trav'ling

Within *Long Time Trav'ling*, Abbie Betinis – adjunct professor of composition at Concordia University in Saint Paul, Minnesota – finds her muse in the storied tradition of American shape-note singing. Shape-note is a pedagogical musical notation that flourished in rural areas of the nineteenth-century American Midwest and South for the singing of sacred and social music; there are many societies that still enjoy this practice today. For her composition, Betinis incorporates the texts of three nineteenth-century hymns: the traditional “Parting Friends” text and tune, the text to John Blain’s “Parting Hand” (1818) and the collaboration of “White” (text from the 1810 edition of *Dobell’s New Selection* and an 1856 tune by Edgar Dumas). As Betinis describes, she followed the shape-note tradition of making each one of the choral parts into a melody that could “charm even when sung by itself,” and has created a rhythmically varied texture that helps “depict the individual travelers as they go their own ways, with their own tunes, then reunite on the grander journey toward the promised land.” *Long time Trav'ling* was premiered in 2005 by The Singers – Minnesota Choral Artists.

My Cell Phone

My Cell Phone is a whimsical piece looking at the adventures of a cell phone during a day of use. The harmonies are based on quartel harmony within a structure of melodic support. In this modern world we tend to treat our phones as if they are living entities. The lyrics of this piece are based on phrases I have heard while observing others use their phones. My question, as implied by the text, centers around the concept that our phone is no longer a phone. It has become our friend and ally in our daily struggle through life.

~~William Rayer

Autumn Reflections

This piece is based upon the poem “October Danger,” written by my friend Anabelle Clark. Prior to composing this piece, I had reached out to her in an effort to understand the craftwork behind writing poetry. This particular text caught my attention because of the fascinating dichotomy she creates between innocent desire and weakness. Through imagery of beautiful autumn scenery, the poem brings about several underlying concepts that are uncomfortable to face: realizing the ease with which we are distracted by desire, being conflicted between what we love and what is ultimately right and losing ourselves while pursuing a romanticized reality. These hidden sentiments spoke to me strongly, and my personal understanding of the poem’s context drew me to set it to music.

~~Natsumi Osborn

Ashes: III. Emendemus in melius

Emendemus in melius is from *Ashes*, a setting of the two antiphons and respond to accompany the imposition of ashes in the Roman Catholic Ash Wednesday rite. Their ideal performance would be in that function (in either Catholic ritual form), though they are suitable for general Lenten liturgical use, or for concert performance, separately or as a unit. The dedicatees of *Emendemus in melius* are the victims of the 2012 Chardon High School shooting, who indeed did not have space for repentance.

~~Jeffrey Quick

The Cleveland Chamber Choir gratefully acknowledges this season’s donors and sincerely thanks our sponsors for recognizing the importance and value of the arts in Northeast Ohio.



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Conductor **Scott MacPherson** is the founding Artistic Director of the Cleveland Chamber Choir. He has consistently earned praise for the performance of choirs under his direction. Classical music critic Daniel Hathaway of Clevelandclassical.com wrote of the choir after their April 2016 concert, “MacPherson’s new professional ensemble validated the initial impression they made last November: this is a superb addition to Cleveland’s musical scene.” His innovative programming blends a variety of musical styles ranging from early music through new works commissioned especially for him and his ensembles. MacPherson’s research of contemporary choral music and choral teaching techniques in Germany has resulted in guest conducting appearances with the *Vokalensemble Kölner Dom* (Cologne Cathedral Choir), the award-winning *Modus Novus* choir based in Cologne, as well as the acclaimed male vocal ensemble *Arcanum Musicae* in Dresden. His international reputation has also drawn praise in Taiwan, where he conducted festival choirs and led workshops in conducting, choral eurhythmics, and choral pedagogy at conferences in Pingtung City and Taipei. In May/June 2018, MacPherson traveled to Beijing, China, where he conducted the Beijing Youth Choir and led workshops in choral eurhythmics for children’s and middle school choirs as well as 200 music teachers in Beijing school districts. He also gave lectures in choral tone and worked with the choir at Baoding Conservatory of Music. MacPherson has been invited to return to Beijing to guest conduct the Beijing Youth Choir in their 10th Anniversary Celebration in July 2019.

MacPherson moved to Ohio in 2008 to take the position of Director of Choral Studies at Kent State University. In addition to conducting the KSU Chorale and Kent Chorus, MacPherson leads the graduate choral conducting program. From 1993-2008, MacPherson was Director of Choral Activities at Trinity University in San Antonio, TX. Before moving to San Antonio, he served on the choral faculty of the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Music where he was a colleague of the late Robert Fountain. MacPherson was also the founding Artistic Director of two other choral distinguished choral groups – the Isthmus Vocal Ensemble (IVE, 2002-2017), and the San Antonio Chamber Choir (SACC, 2005-2014). IVE performed under MacPherson’s direction at the North Central American Choral Directors Association Conference in 2012. IVE released its CD recording, *The Choral Music of Andrew Rindfleisch*, on the Clarion label in 2006. In 2013, SACC performed at the National Conference of the American Choral Directors Association in Dallas, Texas, and at the Texas Choral Directors Association Conference in 2014. In 2012, SACC recorded its first commercial CD, *Careless Carols: The Choral Music of Andrew Rindfleisch*, which is available on the Gothic label. Continuing his professional collaboration with Cleveland composer Andrew Rindfleisch, MacPherson and the Cleveland Chamber Choir embarked on a project of professionally recording many of Rindfleisch’s latest works starting in November 2017.

Laudate Dominum

I composed *Laudate Dominum* for the Kent State University Chorale tour of Italy in the spring of 2001. C. M. Shearer conducted the Chorale in the world premiere series, including performances in Greve, Florence, Venice, and Rome. Psalm 148 is one of several of the Psalms of praise that begin with “Laudate Dominum” (Praise the Lord). The Psalm continues to urge all creation, first the heavens (sun, moon and stars), then the earth and its creatures (fire, hail, snow, ice, mountains, hills, trees, beasts, even dragons), and finally all people of the earth, to praise the Lord.

~ ~ Frank Wiley

Night Flight

For Cecilia McDowall’s *Night Flight*, the personal muse was the centenary of Harriet Quimby’s flight across the English Channel in 1912. Quimby was the first woman to do so, flying from Dover to Calais. The work is divided into three movements, each based on a pastoral poem by the British poet, Shelia Bryer. The poems evoke images of the night, whether at the sea or within a peaceful garden. McDowall’s setting of the first two movements – “New Moon” and “Crow, Landing” – is at times jagged and sharp, but the cello accompaniment, presented frequently in the higher register of the instrument, always gives these movements a feeling of the ethereal. The third movement, “Before Dawn,” combines the cello’s fuller register with an expansive chorus that evokes both Renaissance counterpoint and film scores. McDowall, composer-in-residence at Dulwich College, London, has won many awards for her work; *Night Flight* was the winner of the British Composer Award for Choral Music in 2014. The piece was commissioned by the Musique Cordiale International Festival and premiered in 2013 by the Choir of Claire College, Cambridge (Stephen Jones, conductor).

The Road Not Taken

This is my second choral setting of Frost’s “The Road Not Taken,” a poem with which I have always resonated. My first setting, melodically and harmonically different, set for SSA choir, was premiered in 2003 by the Ohio State University Women’s Glee Club. When I contacted the owner of Frost’s works, the Holt Co., to ask permission to use the poem - after the performance - they replied with a harsh “No.” In 2010 I was relieved to discover that this poem was in the public domain. I confirmed this with the Holt Co., who replied with a short, “Yes.” This Monday, I will take another “road less travelled by” as I bid farewell to Ohio and relocate to Olympia, WA.

~ ~ Dawn Sonntag

“Hope” is the thing with feathers

Emily Dickinson was an enigma. Her poetry reveals a complex and brilliant intellect, expressing universal emotions with simple sentence structures and enduring metaphors. Yet, in her personal life, she lived a reclusive life, rarely venturing from home, and had trouble developing permanent relationships. “‘Hope’ is the thing with feathers” is one of her most beloved poems, using the image of a feathered bird perched in our souls that continues to sing no matter the circumstances. Metrically, she sometimes uses dashes instead of commas, with a placement that emphasizes certain words by breaking the rhythmic pattern.

~ ~ Scott Michal

Nation’s Prayer

A setting of the traditional Requiem with scripture and poetry, the seven movement *Nation’s Prayer* is a piece of mourning, challenge and hope for the Nation’s soul. First conceived during the Gulf war, this invocation remains relevant. The opening, performed today, is a prayer for peace built around the poignant minor seventh. In contrast, the fourth movement, a troubled Dies Irae, features the dissonant tritone. This traditional

text of judgment is juxtaposed with scripture, including a closing reminder from the prophet Micah, that God's requirements for the Nations are simple: to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God.

~~Jennifer Conner

The Drowned Lovers and The Bluebird

The muse for Judith Bingham's *The Drowned Lovers* is slightly different: as a British composer and mezzo-soprano, Bingham has been long steeped in a rich choral tradition. Within *The Drowned Lovers*, Bingham takes the materials – particularly the harmonies – from Charles Villiers Stanford's charming and well-known choral work *The Bluebird* and rearranges them into an expansive sonic tapestry. The performance of *The Drowned Lovers* will flow right into *The Bluebird*, which is the correct performance practice for this work, according to Bingham's instructions. Both poems are about a romantic infinite. The text for Bingham's composition, which she wrote herself, is in a way the mirror image of Stanford's setting of Mary Elizabeth Coleridge's poem. The speaker in Coleridge's poem is passive: catching a moment of sublime, transcendent beauty, watching a bluebird framed by a blue sky, and reflected in the blue water of a lake. Bingham's text imagines a very active opposite: while swimming, a young woman is convinced that her lover spurns her. She pulls him to the bottom of the lake, drowning them both while looking up to the surface of the water, seeing it as sky. The Joyful Company of Singers (Peter Broadbent, conductor) premiered *The Drowned Lovers* in 2000. Stanford's *The Bluebird* was originally published in 1910.

The Word Was God

Rosephanye Dunn Powell is a composer, choral conductor, singer, and the Charles W. Barkley endowed professor at Auburn University. Her work as a singer – particularly in championing the music of William Grant Still and the interpretation of spirituals – informs both her choice of texts and has been her personal muse when composing. She concentrates on writing music that is melodic, rhythmically active, and demonstrative of its texts. Powell calls her composition, *The Word was God*, “a musical word-painting of the creation.” The text, from the Gospel of John, chapter 1, verses 1-3, describes the metaphorical origins of the world through the word and voice of God. The opening simplicity represents the unity of God and the word, and as the word builds the world, the music becomes more rhythmically complex. Powell composed *The Word Was God* for the Philander Smith Collegiate Choir in Little Rock, Arkansas for a concert in 1996. The choir at that time was directed by her husband, William Powell.

Daniel, Daniel, Servant of the Lord

The personal muse within Undine Smith Moore's arrangement of *Daniel, Daniel, Servant of the Lord* from 1953, is a double one. Moore remarked on more than one occasion that she was a “teacher first, and composer second.” In this guise, she taught at Virginia State University for more than 40 years. Moore was also highly interested in the arrangement, promotion, and preservation of African-American genres, particularly spirituals. Within *Daniel, Daniel, Servant of the Lord* both of these threads come together. Her arrangement of this spiritual is an example of clarity and precision in composition, making it an amazing pedagogical model for her choirs and students. Within this work, she also presents numerous elements that help choirs master elements of traditional African-American music, including call and response patterns and how even simple rhythmic motives can provide amazing vitality. Moore's arrangement is one of the most popular pieces for choirs throughout the United States and is used frequently as a required selection in choral contests.

~~Charles Edward McGuire, Ph.D., Professor of Musicology, Oberlin College & Conservatory

Cleveland Chamber Choir

Scott MacPherson, *Artistic Director & Conductor*



Soprano

Kristine Caswelch
Sarah Henley
Heather Morrison
Marie Taylor
Melissa Vandergriff
Kiko Weinroth

Alto

Dani Arndt
Courtney Becker-Howell
Katie Fowler
Kimberly Lauritsen
Kira McGirr
Jenna Hall Tucker

Tenor

Benjamin Hayes
Manuel Gomez
Joel Kincannon
Jesse Reed
Gregory Ristow
Michael Wiley

Bass

Anthony Cooley
Noah Hamrick
Daniel Kenworthy
Nicholas Landrum
Corey K. Rubin
Jelani Watkins

Karen Prasser and Jacob Bernhardt, *rehearsal accompanists*

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Kira McGirr, *Managing Director*



Pianist **Karen Prasser** is both a musician and an arts administrator. First and foremost a musician, Karen has served as pianist and conductor for opera and ballet companies including Michigan Opera Theater, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Fort Worth Opera, Dallas Opera, Western Opera Theatre, Lake George Opera Festival, Artpark, Orlando Opera Company, Augusta Opera, New Orleans Opera, Skylight Comic Opera, Richmond Ballet and the Edinburgh International Music Festival. Karen currently serves as the music director at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Solon, Ohio, a position she has held for nine years. She is also staff accompanist at Kent State University – The Hugh A. Glauser School of Music. She also currently serves as Executive Director of Chagrin Arts in Chagrin Falls. Her extensive experience in arts administration and management also includes serving as Executive Director of Summit Choral Society (three years), Solon Center for the Arts (nine years) and The Children's Museum of Cleveland (six years), and marketing director at Cleveland Ballet, Great Lakes Theatre Festival and the Wheeling Symphony. Karen earned her Master of Music in piano accompanying from Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and her Bachelor of Music in both piano and voice from the University of Nebraska at Omaha.



The **Cleveland Chamber Choir** provides audiences with exceptional performances of unique and diverse repertoire, blending music by living composers with six centuries of choral repertoire. Addressing relevant issues and universal emotions through music and poetry of profound beauty, this world-class ensemble of professional voices offers a vibrant, dynamic, and thought-provoking listening experience in some of Northeast Ohio's most stunning venues.

Under the direction of renowned Artistic Director Scott MacPherson, the Choir is committed to giving voice to living composers. Since its debut in 2015, the Choir has commissioned and/or given world or United States premieres of ten works during its first four seasons. The Cleveland Chamber Choir organization is a family of performing artists, administrators, and audience members brought together in the philosophy that choral music is a vehicle for good in the world. The Cleveland Chamber Choir: *More than Music!*

Please like us on Facebook and visit clevelandchamberchoir.org for information on future performances, as well as for biographies of our singers. You may sign up on our website for our newsletter and concert announcements. Professional-caliber singers interested in auditioning should review audition requirements at clevelandchamberchoir.org/audition and then send an email to clevelandchamberchoir@gmail.com to schedule an audition.



The **Cleveland Composers Guild** is one of the nation's oldest new music organizations and has had over 200 composer members over its more than fifty-year history. Over the past half-century, the CCG has built an enviable record of supporting new music, with recordings on the CRI, Crystal, Advent, and Capstone labels, and publication series from Ludwig and Galaxy. There are currently about 40 professional composers in the Guild and each concert features a wide range of musical styles. In recent years the Guild has collaborated with the Cleveland Opera Theater, The Syndicate For The New Arts, Cleveland Ballet, the Rocky River Chamber Music Society, the Cleveland Classical Guitar Society, and with various local artists to create multi-disciplinary concerts that engage with the arts in a new way. The CCG produces numerous live concerts every season featuring the finest performers available in Northeast Ohio, and all concerts are free-of-charge. In addition to regular series programs, the Guild produces an annual Creativity: Learning Through Experience concert in tandem with the Music Settlement in University Circle. Pre-college age students perform music written for them by Guild members and compose original music as well; it is a great way to encourage the next generation of musicians to love new music. *Listen new, listen local!*



photo credit: Elisa Vietri

The Texts & Translations~~



Long Time Trav'ling

Farewell, my friends, I'm bound for Canaan,
I'm trav'ling through the wilderness;
Your company has been delightful,
You, who doth leave my mind distressed.

Parting Friends (traditional tune and lyrics)

I go away, behind to leave you,
Perhaps never to meet again,
But if we never have the pleasure,
I hope we'll meet on Canaan's land.

Farewell, my friends, both old and young,
I hope in peace you'll still go on;
How oft I've seen your flowing tears,
And heard you tell your hopes and fears!

Parting Hand (lyrics by John Blain 1818, edited and revised by A. Betinis)

Your hearts with love were seen to flame,
Which makes me hope we'll meet again.
Ye mourning souls, lift up your eyes
And live in love, for love's alive.

I'm a long time trav'ling here below,
I'm a long time trav'ling away from home,
I'm a long time trav'ling here below,
To lay this body down.

White (tune by Edgar Dumas 1856; lyrics from Dobell's New Selection 1810; revised A. Betinis)

Farewell, my friends, whose tender care
Has long engaged my love;
Your fond embrace I now exchange
For land I know not of...

My Cell Phone (A day in the life of a cell phone) *(text by W. F. Rayer, b. 1946)*

Where is my phone? I need my phone. Help!

What if he texts? I can not answer.

What if she texts? I can not answer!

Oh no! We need help!

Hey Siri...Call Alexa...Cortana...Hey Google

Is that a text? Is that text for me?

(Siri): *I'm sorry, I do not know the answer for that.*

At work, I try to text...Watch out for the boss!

I hide my phone between my arms. He doesn't see it, I don't think!

Hey Siri...Call Alexa...Hey Cortana...Hey Google

We need help! Is my boss near me?

(Siri): *Listings for BOSS, here they are...*

I walk down the street. I do not see, I do not hear, my cell is all I try to see.

Hey Siri...Call Alexa...Hey Cortana...Hey Google

We need help! How do I get home?

(Siri): *There is an app for that.*

The phone has GPS. How cool! It used my location to find my home, I'm home.

That's it, I found my home. That was quite a trip! I'm home!

Autumn Reflections *(text by Anabelle Clark, b. 1999)*

I am falling again

into the mid-autumn danger

ushered in by the blushing trees,

and the warning scarlet leaves,

and the winding path to nowhere,

paved by solitude and despair.

I am in danger

of being swept up in the leaves.

I can't think anymore—

which of these feelings are real?

The tantalizing whispers of the wind

and the tapdancing October rains

have muddled them all into one.

Ashes: III. Emendemus in melius *(text from the Matins Responsory from Lent I)*

Let us amend for the better in those things

in which we have sinned through ignorance;

lest, suddenly overtaken by the day of death,

we seek space for repentance and are not able to find it.

Attend, O Lord and have mercy, for we have sinned against Thee.

Help us. O God, our Savior, and for the glory of Thy name, O Lord, deliver us.

The Word Was God *(text from John 1: 1-3)*

In the beginning was the Word,

and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The same was in the beginning with God.

All things were made that have been made.

Nothing was made He has not made.

All things were made by Him.

Daniel, Daniel, Servant of the Lord *(traditional)*

Oh, the king cried, "Oh, Daniel, Daniel, oh! A-that-a Hebrew Daniel, Servant of the Lord!"

Among the Hebrew nation, one Hebrew, Daniel was found.

They put him in a-the lion's den. He stayed there all night long.

Oh, the king cried, "Oh, Daniel, Daniel, oh! A-that-a Hebrew Daniel, Servant of the Lord!"

Now the king in his sleep was troubled, and early in the morning he rose,

to find God had sent a-his angel down to lock the lion's jaws.

Oh, the king cried, "Oh, Daniel, Daniel, oh! A-that-a Hebrew Daniel, Servant of the Lord!"

The Acknowledgements ~ ~



The Cleveland Chamber Choir wishes to thank the following people, churches, and organizations for their generous help in making this program possible:

To the **Cleveland Composers Guild**, **Joseph Hollings**, **Matthew Saunders**, and all members of the Guild who supported this collaboration; to **Fairmount Presbyterian Church**, **Leah Wyman**, and all staff and volunteers for graciously hosting us in their beautiful sanctuary; to **First Congregational Church of Akron**, **Kasey Kalchert**, and all staff and volunteers for kindly hosting us in their lovely sanctuary; to **Karen Prasser** and **Jacob Bernhardt** for their invaluable assistance in rehearsals; to **Chad and Kim Lauritsen** and **St. Peter's Lutheran Church Shaker Heights** for welcoming us into their space for our rehearsals; to **Corey Fowler** for his creativity in designing the posters and program cover; to Oberlin College & Conservatory Professor of Musicology **Charles Edward McGuire** for providing the pre-concert talk and writing the program notes; to **Nicolás Turnberrez** for his assistance in soliciting sponsors and advertisers; to Managing Director **Kira McGirr** for the incredible volunteer work she does to keep this organization moving; to our ushers and volunteers; and of course, to *you* for showing your support of the choral art by being here with us.

Dies Irae (*from the Roman Catholic Mass for the Dead and biblical, books of Matthew and Micah*)

This day, this day of wrath shall consume the world in ashes, as foretold by David and Sibyl. What trembling there will be, when the judge shall come to weigh everything strictly.

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.

The trumpet, scattering its awful sound across the graves of all lands, will summon all before the throne. Death and nature shall be stunned, when mankind arises, to render account before the judge.

With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?
Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil?
Shall I offer my first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

The written book shall be brought in which all is contained,
whereby the world shall be judged.

He hath shown thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require but to act justly and love mercy and walk humbly with your God?

~

The Drowned Lovers (*text by Judith Bingham, b. 1952*)

Blue, blue in blue, in the deepest reaches of the lake, I and my love do lie, (cold and still)
I clung to him and pulled him down, (blue below) and so we both did die, (blue in blue)
th'un caring, clear blue waters, over our heads did close, (cold and still)
and shoals of fishes, sightlessly, in clouds around us rose, (blue)
In the deepest reaches, of the lake, (His image, cold and still)
His pale green eyes were cold in death, (His image, cold and still) his love had been a lie,
a lie, but now we share a watery grave, (cold and still) forever intertwined,
Forever! Forever! Blue! Blue! (blue in blue)

The Bluebird (*text by Mary Elizabeth Coleridge, 1861-1907*)

The lake lay blue below the hill.
O'er it, as I looked, there flew
Across the waters, cold and still,
A bird whose wings were palest blue.

The sky above was blue at last,
The sky beneath me blue in blue.
A moment, ere the bird had passed,
It caught his image as he flew.

Laudate Dominum (*text from Psalm 148: 1-14*)

¹Praise ye the Lord from the heavens: praise ye him in the high places.

²Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts.

³Praise ye him, O sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars and light.

⁴Praise him, ye heavens of heavens: and let all the waters that are above the heavens.

⁵Praise the name of the Lord.

For he spoke, and they were made: he commanded, and they were created.

⁶He hath established them forever, and for ages of ages:

He hath made a decree, and it shall not pass away.

⁷Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all ye deeps:

⁸Fire, hail, snow, ice, stormy winds which fulfill his word:

⁹Mountains and all hills, fruitful trees and all cedars:

¹⁰Beasts and all cattle: serpents and feathered fowls:

¹¹Kings of the earth and all people: princes and all judges of the earth:

¹²Young men and maidens: let the old with the younger, praise the name of the Lord:

¹³For his name alone is exalted.

¹⁴The praise of him is above heaven and earth: and he hath exalted the horn of his people.

A hymn to all his saints: to the children of Israel, a people approaching to him. Alleluia.

Night Flight (*text by Sheila Bryer, b. 1953*)

1. New Moon

You can be thrown off balance here
Amongst the wintry seaweed, rock and sand
As if the mind, like some young gull
Left teetering on an icy ledge, dared not look down.
Last night a new moon's gleaming keyhole,
Barest sliver of a nail, drew me through
And hung me high above the huddled town.
Such soaring freedom there – to fly from star
To lightship to an island's throbbing beam,
Trailing silver tightropes on the glittering air -
Or tumble headlong through a night cloud, rise
Unseen by all save one who holds the threads,
Spreading silken nets across a sullen sea.
They catch us as we waken
Plunging earthwards
Out of dream.

2. Crow, landing

Sudden winglift, unexpected updraft
And beneath, brushed smooth, the tidal runway
Shelving down to where a white surf melts
The margins, coughing softly to itself.
This tidal stretch and pull becomes a cleansing
Of old weariness, of tangled thought
And malcontent left snagged on grasses
Like the detritus from long forgotten picnics.
Day, swept blue and gold as benediction
Is an invitation to forget ourselves,
Become abandoned, out of place;
To take a chance below the waterline.
Ungainly hoverer, a blown rag,
He angles steeply, legs extended, braced.

3. Before Dawn

One hour before dawn,
the garden, stripped of light and shade,
is utterly itself:
a place of solid stillness
filled with Earth's heart murmurings
and heavy scents.
After the languor of a wearying heat
we easily forget how wet her dew can be,
stepping out so carelessly
barefoot over moonlit grass
with eyes on stars
moulding into prisms.
I might have been an early suppliant
hurrying to greet the day
wrapt in summer morning,
my foot fall as an anchor,
my hands outstretched,
reaching for their vast medieval heaven.

The Road Not Taken (text by Robert Frost, 1874-1963)

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,

Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Hope is a thing with feathers (text by Emily Dickinson, 1830-1886)

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chilliest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet - never - in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of me.

Nation's Prayer

Requiem (from the Roman Catholic Mass for the Dead)

Eternal rest give unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.
A hymn, O God, becometh Thee in Zion; and a vow shall be paid to Thee in Jerusalem:
hear my prayer; all flesh shall come to Thee.
Eternal rest give unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.