

umeri

DRAKE UNIVERSITY
ALUMNI CHOIR

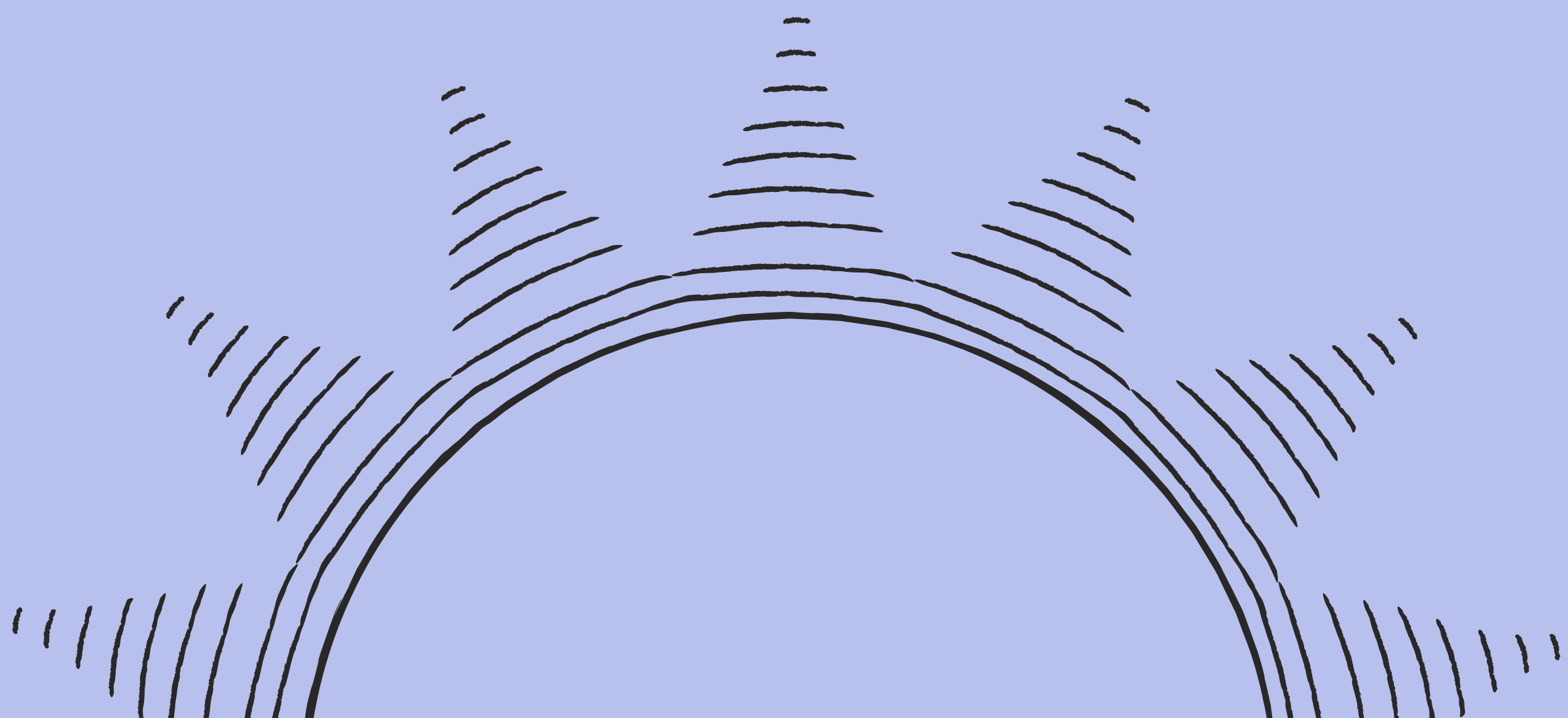
p r e s e n t s

HOPE SPRINGS

Hope...is a dimension of the soul. It is an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart; it transcends the world that is immediately experienced and is anchored somewhere beyond its horizons. Hope...is not the same as joy that things are going well, or willingness to invest in enterprises that are obviously headed for early success, but, rather, an ability to work for something because it is good, not just because it stands a chance to succeed.

-Vaclav Havel (1936-2011)

Havel, a playwright, poet, and political dissident served as the last president of Czechoslovakia (1989-1992) and the first president of the Czech Republic (1993-2003).



HOPE SPRINGS

The Hope of Loving

I. Yield to Love

II. Wild Forces

Jake Runestad

(b. 1986)

I Go Among Trees

Giselle Wyers

(b. 1969)

Beatus Vir from *Vesperae Solennes de Dominica*, KV 321

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

(1756–1791)

Lauren Carroll, soprano

Allison Vehlewald, mezzo soprano

Seth Hammond, tenor

Jacob Fross, bass

In the Night We Shall Go In

Imant Raminsh

(b. 1943)

Choral Dances from *Gloriana*

I. Time

II. Concord

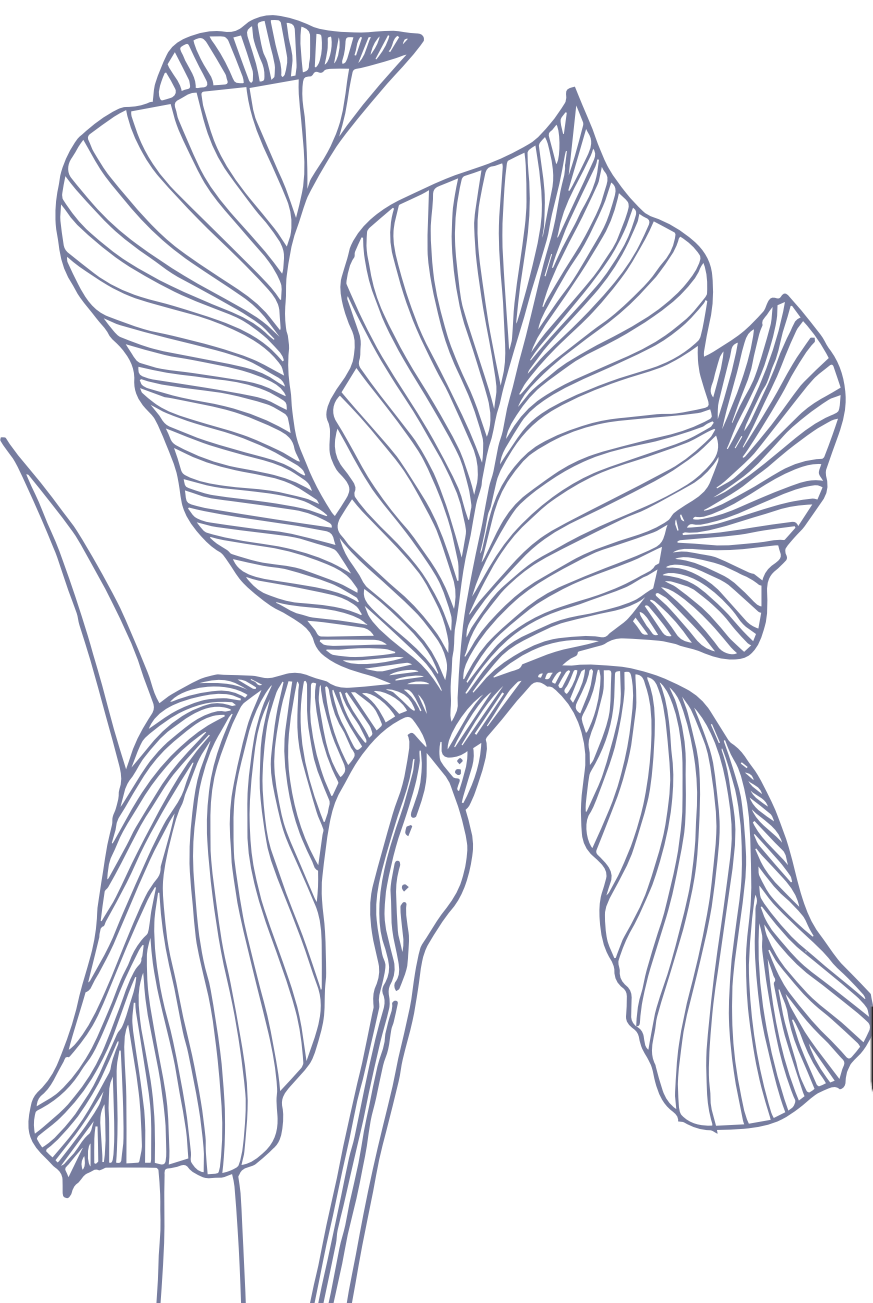
Benjamin Britten

(1913–1976)

Woke Up This Morning

freedom song

arr. Jeffrey Douma



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NOTES & TRANSLATIONS

The Hope of Loving – Jake Runestad

Runestad, a renowned composer based in Minneapolis, wrote, “With all of the inequality, violence, and pain in our world, I continue to dwell on the importance and impact of love...”

When considering the focus for this commission, I didn’t necessarily choose the topic of love; it was a calling. I am a hoarder of poetry and one of my favorite collections is *Love Poems from God*,” a volume of mystical poems collected by Daniel Ladinsky and sourced from works by both Eastern and Western writers. Runestad’s multi-movement work, commissioned by Seraphic Fire, a professional vocal ensemble in which Drake alumnus Thomas McCargar has sung, features the interval of a perfect fourth. (Sing the first two notes of “Here comes the bride” and you’ll identify that interval.). Runestad uses this open-sounding interval, both melodically and harmonically, not only as a musical motive, but, in his words, as “a signpost, the embodiment of love.”

The first movement (*Yield to Love*) is Runestad’s paraphrase of two poems by Rabia (ca. 717-801). Ladinsky notes that she is “without doubt the most popular and influential of female Islamic saints and a central figure in the Sufi tradition.

Rabia’s poems:

The Way The Forest Shelters

*I know about love the way
the fields know about light,
the way the forest shelters,
the way an animal’s divine raw desire
seeks to unite with whatever might please its soul—
without a single strange thought of remorse.*

*There is a powerful delegation in us that lobbies
every moment for contentment.*

*How will you ever find peace
unless you yield to love
the way the gracious earth does to our hand’s impulse.*

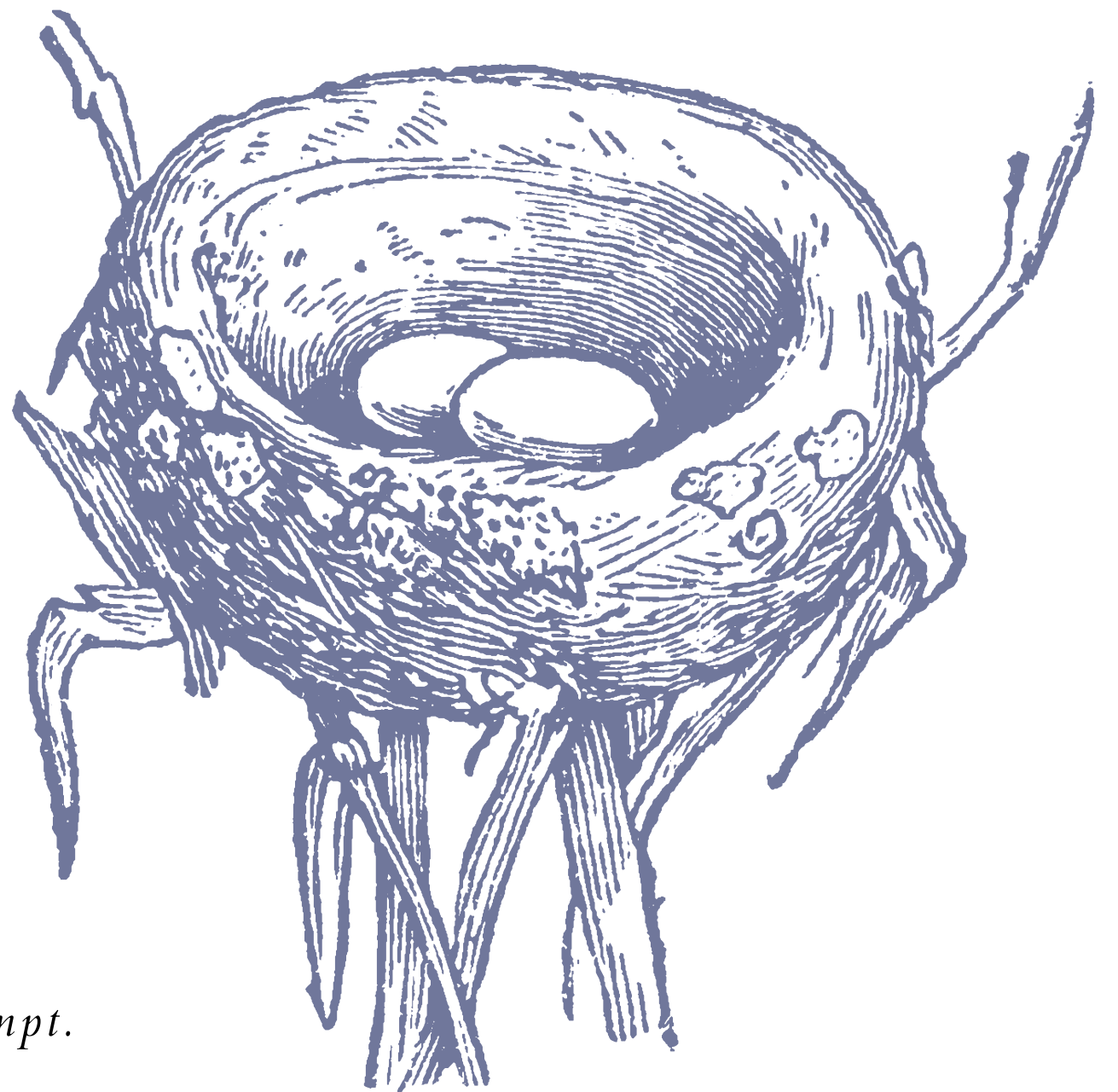
My Poems Attempt

*All of what I would want my child to know my poems attempt.
We are infants before each other, are we not,
So vulnerable to each other’s words and movements.*

A school I sat in cured me of hurting others.

*I have come to see that all are seated at His table,
And I have become His servant.*

*Sometimes God is too shy to speak in public and He pinches me.
That is my cue to fill the blanks of your understanding the best I can.*



Runestad's paraphrase of those poems for *Yield to Love*:

*I know about love the way the fields know about light,
the way the forest shelters us.*

*We are vulnerable like an infant.
we need each other's care or we will suffer.*

*How will you ever find peace
unless you yield to love?*

The second movement (*Wild Forces*) is a setting of a text written by Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), the son of a wealthy linen merchant, who, as a young adult served as a knight. His career in the military during the Crusades took him to the Middle East where he realized that he didn't want to be a businessman or a knight. He returned to Assisi, divested himself of all his wealth, and dedicated himself to serving the poor. Francis' respect and love for all of creation, human, animal, and the natural world, made him beloved in his own time and in the centuries since. Many people regard him as the first environmentalist and his care and concern for the earth and its inhabitants positions him as an inspiration in the twenty-first century.

Francis' poem:

Wild Forces

There are beautiful wild forces within us.

*Let them turn the mills inside and fill sacks
that feed even heaven.*

Runestad's paraphrased setting:

*There are beautiful, wild forces within us.
Let them turn millstones inside
Filling bushels that reach to the sky.*

I Go Among Trees – Giselle Wyers

Wyers is Associate Director of Choral Studies at the University of Washington and wrote this piece for the University's Chamber Singers and their conductor, Dr. Geoffrey Boers. It is a setting of a poem by Wendell Berry, a Kentucky poet, from his collection, *A Timbered Choir: The Sabbath Poems*. In it, Berry explores the concept of fear, including the fear of oneself, aspects of one's life situations, and nature.

*I go among trees and sit still.
All my stirring becomes quiet around me like circles on water.
My tasks lie in their places where I left them, asleep like cattle.
Then what is afraid in me comes and lives awhile in my sight.
What it fears in me leaves me, and the fear of me leaves it.*

*It sings, and I hear its song.
Then what I am afraid of comes.
I live for awhile in its sight.
What I fear in it leaves it, and the fear of it leaves me.*

*It sings, and I hear its song.
After days of labor, mute in my consternations,
I hear my song at last, and I sing it.
As we sing the day turns, the trees move.*

NOTES & TRANSLATIONS (CONT.)

Beatus vir from *Vesperae solennes de Dominica*, KV 321 – Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Beatus vir is the third movement of the first of Mozart's two Vespers settings. Vespers is a service of evening prayer and is one of the canonical hours of the Liturgy of the Hours, still observed in the Anglican, Orthodox, and Catholic traditions. It includes various psalms, a hymn, doxology, Scriptural reading, and the Magnificat. In Mozart's time Vespers was chanted during the week but celebrated with "figural" or composed music on Sundays. Mozart's two Vespers settings were written while he was employed by the Archbishop of Salzburg for performance in the Cathedral. Mozart composed the KV 321 setting in 1779, shortly after returning to Salzburg from a tour of Europe that included Mannheim, Augsburg, and Paris, where his mother, who served as his companion on the journey, the goal of which was to secure employment at another court or archbishopric for the twenty-two year old composer, died unexpectedly.

Beatus vir, a setting of Psalm 111, is the third of the six movements of this Vespers, which includes five psalms and the Magnificat.

Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who delights in his commandments.

His seed shall be mighty upon the earth; the generation of the righteous shall be blessed.

Glory and prosperity shall be in his house; and his justice endures from generation to generation.

A light has risen in the darkness for the upright: one who is merciful, compassionate, and just.

Happy is the man who sympathizes and shares, who chooses his words with discretion.

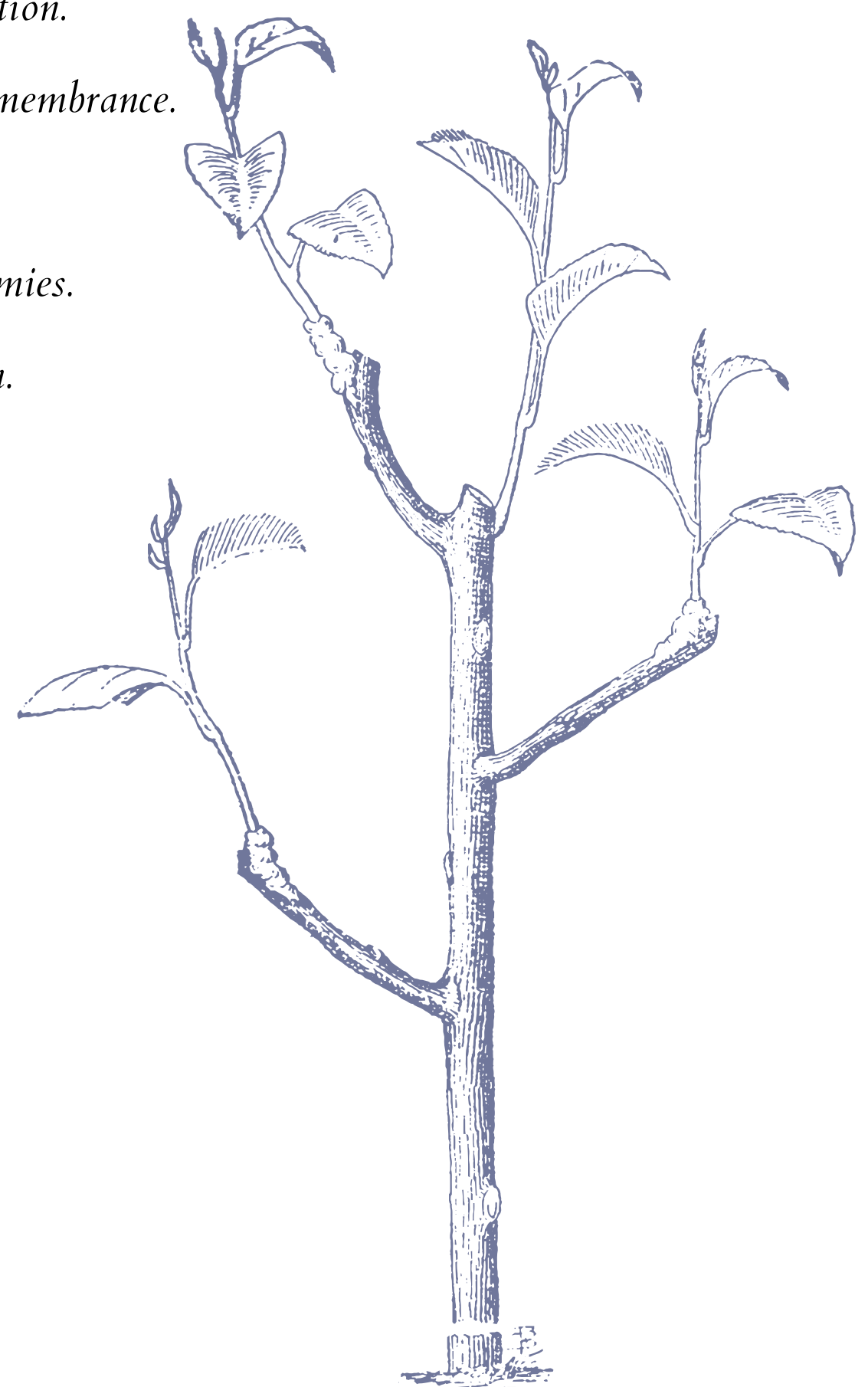
Because he will not be troubled for eternity; the just man shall be in everlasting remembrance.

He shall not fear evil tidings; his heart is ready to hope in the Lord.

His heart is strengthened; he shall not be shaken until he looks down upon his enemies.

*He disperses, he gives to the poor; his justice endures from generation to generation.
His horn shall be exalted with honor.*

*The wicked will see, and be angered; he will gnash with his teeth, and waste away.
The desire of the wicked shall perish.*



In the Night We Shall Go In – Imant Raminsh

Raminsh, a Canadian citizen born in Latvia, studied violin, composition, and conducting at Salzburg's famed Mozarteum, as well as at the Royal Conservatory of Music, and the University of Toronto, where he was mentored by Elmer Iseler, one of Canada's most influential choral conductors. In this piece, Raminsh set a poem by the Chilean writer, dissident, and Nobel Prize winner Pablo Neruda (1904–1973). Like so much of Neruda's poetry, it is characterized by sensuousness, a glorification of direct experience, and urgency of language. Raminsh's setting amplifies those characteristics by its employment of the solo cello, frequent modulations, textural changes, and canonic treatment of the main musical motive.

*In the night we shall go in,
we shall go in to steal a flow'ring branch.*

*We shall climb over the wall in the darkness of the alien garden,
two shadows in the shadow.*

*Winter is not yet gone,
and the apple tree appears suddenly changed
into a cascade of fragrant stars.*

*In the night we shall go in,
we shall go in up to its trembling firmament,
and your hands, your little hands and mine will steal the stars.*

*Silently to our house in the night and the shadow,
with your steps will enter perfume's silent step,
and with starry feet the clear body of spring.*

Two movements from Choral Dances from *Gloriana* – Benjamin Britten

Gloriana, an opera written by England's most revered mid-century composer, with libretto by William Plomer, was premiered at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, in June 1953 in celebration of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. *Gloriana* was the name that the sixteenth century poet Edmund Spenser gave to the character who represented Elizabeth I in his poem *The Faerie Queen* and it became the appellation by which her subjects most frequently referred to her. Britten's opera was actually one of his least successful compositions but the five Choral Dances remain in the repertoire. Our experiences of the past year have certainly reoriented our concepts of time. Britten's first Choral Dance, *Time*, with its hopeful and energetic text, ably captured by the composer's rhythmic contrasts, invites us to consider time as we emerge from the pandemic, just as it provided an opportunity for Elizabeth II's subjects to reflect on their hope for the future as she began her reign. The second Choral Dance, *Concord*, reminds us that it is in the pursuit of the common good that we find harmony.

NOTES & TRANSLATIONS (CONT.)

Time

*Yes he is Time, lusty and blithe!
Time is at his apogee!
Although you thought to see
A bearded ancient with a scythe.*

*No reaper he that cries "Take heed!"
Time's at his apogee!
Young and strong in his prime,
Behold the sower of the seed!*

Concord

*Concord is here
Our days to bless
And this our land to endue with plenty,
peace and happiness.*

*Concord and Time,
Each needeth each:
The ripest fruit hangs where
Not one, not one, but only two can reach.*

Woke Up This Morning – freedom song, arr. Jeffrey Douma

Freedom songs were spirituals and gospel songs with changed texts, used by Freedom Riders and other civil rights activists as they struggled to secure racial justice in the 1960s. Their purpose in changing portions of the texts was to make them inclusive and focused on the movement's central goal. Singing was a way of life and was seen as crucial to the productivity of the movement. There was often more singing than talking during civil rights protests and demonstrations and participants and leaders, including the late John Lewis, often testified to the power of music in providing a sense of unity and courage to those engaged in the fight for racial justice.

Woke up this morning with my mind stayed on freedom, hallelujah!

If you have enjoyed this concert, we hope you'll consider donating to Umeri, which is a self-sustaining organization. You may donate online at: <https://alumni.drake.edu/umeri>



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Susan Ihnen, piano/organ
Aimee Beckmann-Collier, conductor

Soprano

Jessica Belch
Lauren Carroll
Anna Gebhardt
Gabbi Sarcone
Elizabeth Watson

Alto

Amy Deist
Brianna Dompke
Kayleigh Koester
Maggie Parker
Faith Satern
Allison Vehlewald

Tenor

Trevor Bridge
Casey Cervený
Seth Hammond
Scott Smidt

Bass

Jacob Fross
Ian Ksiazak
Nathan Jacobson
Daniel Minnie
Ben Schultz

In collaboration with current Drake students

Hannah Cool, violin
Marti Steinblums, violin
Allison Hargreaves, viola
Flavio Unzueta Lopez, cello

About the Choir

Founded in November 2019, Umeri is an ensemble of alumni of the Drake Choir, Drake University. Singers who have participated in the ensemble since its inception graduated from Drake in 1992 through 2020, majored in a wide variety of academic disciplines, and are contributing to the Greater Des Moines community in many professional areas, including education, health care, public relations, finance, marketing, accounting, sports administration, and the arts. Among their employers are a number of school districts, as well as the Meredith Corporation, Wells Fargo, Nationwide, US Cellular, Des Moines Performing Arts, Iowa Public Radio, Principal Financial Group, Drake University, Target, the Iowa Events Center, Make-a-Wish Iowa, the Iowa Center for Economic Success, the Iowa High School Girls Athletic Union, and Veterans Hospital of Central Iowa.

Umeri, which takes its name from the Latin words for “shoulders,” because Drake Choir members were frequently reminded that they stood on the shoulders of those who came before them, is a project-based ensemble. The choir rehearses 6-7 times preceding a concert, thus requiring a high level of musical independence and advance preparation on the part of each member. Umeri presents three concerts per year, with their next performance tentatively slated for October. For further information, contact Dr. Aimee Beckmann-Collier (aimee.beckmann-collier@drake.edu).

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Joyce Smith

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