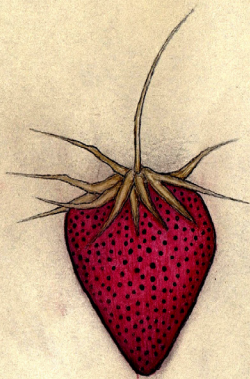


CARTHAGE
JAMES PRIMOSCH



navona

THE CROSSING
DONALD NALLY

CARTHAGE

Notes

Journey

Music by James Primosch (b.1956)

Words by Jon M. Sweeney and Mark S. Burrows, after a text by Meister Eckhart (1260-1328)

Commissioned by The Crossing and Donald Nally. Premiered by Emmanuel Music, Ryan Turner, conducting, at Emmanuel Church, Boston MA, December 21, 2019.

There is a journey you must take.
It is a journey without destination.
There is no map.
Your soul will lead you.
And you can take nothing with you.

—From Meister Eckhart's Book of the Heart: Meditations for the Restless Soul © 2017 by Jon M. Sweeney and Mark S. Burrows, used with permission from Hampton Roads Publishing c/o Red Wheel Weiser LLC, Newburyport MA (redwheelweiser.com)

Carthage

Music by James Primosch

Words by Marilynne Robinson (b. 1943)

Commissioned by The Crossing and Donald Nally and premiered October 27, 2018 at the Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia PA

a note from the composer:

I first came upon the text for *Carthage* from the novel *Housekeeping* by Marilynne Robinson, when it was quoted in Christian Wiman's book *My Bright Abyss*. Wiman rightly speaks of the text as being "of consummate clarity and beauty," going on to say how it "so perfectly articulate[s] not only the sense of absence... but also bestow[s] on it an energy and agency, a prayerful but indefinable promise: 'the world will be made whole.'" It was this combination of absence and promise, lack and fullness, that attracted me and led me to music of sober reflection and wild joy.

—
Imagine a Carthage sown with salt, and all the sowers gone, and the seeds lain however long in the earth, till there rose finally in vegetable profusion leaves and trees of rime and brine. What flowering would there be in such a garden? Light would force each salt calyx to open in prisms, and to fruit heavily with bright globes of water — peaches and grapes

are little more than that, and where the world was salt there would be greater need of slaking. For need can blossom into all the compensations it requires. To crave and to have are as like as a thing and its shadow. For when does a berry break upon the tongue as sweet as when one longs to taste it, and when is the taste refracted into so many hues and savors of ripeness and earth, and when do our senses know any thing so utterly as when we lack it? And here again is foreshadowing — the world will be made whole. For to wish for a hand on one's hair is all but to feel it. So whatever we may lose, very craving gives it back to us again. Though we dream and hardly know it, longing, like an angel, fosters us, smooths our hair, and brings us wild strawberries.

—Excerpt from *Housekeeping* by Marilynne Robinson. Copyright © 1981 by Marilynne Robinson. Reprinted by permission of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, LLC.

Mass for the Day of St. Thomas Didymus

Music by James Primosch

Words by Denise Levertov (1923-1997) and from the *Latin Ordinary of the Mass*

Commissioned by The Crossing and Donald Nally, and made possible with support from the Knight Foundation. Premiered June 28, 2014 at the Icebox Project Space at CraneArts, Philadelphia PA

a note from the composer:

This work is part of a long tradition of Mass settings that juxtapose additional poems with the standard Latin texts; Requiems of Benjamin Britten and Christopher Rouse are recent examples, though the practice of poetic insertions originated many centuries ago. I have assigned the Latin texts (excerpts in the case of the "Credo") to a group of four solo singers while the main choir sings excerpts from a cycle of poems by Denise Levertov inspired by the Mass texts. The Latin settings are in the manner of various forms of liturgical music, and include quotations of a Bach chorale and Gregorian chant.

The title of my piece is that of the Levertov cycle. St. Thomas Didymus is the apostle Thomas, with the designation "Didymus" meaning "the twin." Thomas is informally known as "doubting Thomas" because of his insistence on seeing and touching Jesus before he would believe in the Resurrection. Upon subsequently seeing Christ, he acknowledged him as "My Lord and my God." A Mass honoring St. Thomas is a Mass that honors the juxtaposition of doubt and belief that is the basis of life in pursuit of the divine. The simple pair of twin statements in Levertov's reflection on the "Credo" is the pivot of the work:

"I believe and
interrupt my belief with
doubt. I doubt and
interrupt my doubt with belief."

Note: ellipses (.....) indicate where cuts have been made in the texts

I. Kyrie

O deep unknown, guttering candle,
beloved nugget lodged
in the obscure heart's
last recess,
have mercy upon us.

We choose from the past, tearing morsels
to feed
pride or grievance.
We live in terror
of what we know:

death, death, and the world's
death we imagine
and cannot imagine,
we who may be
the first and last witness.

We live in terror
of what we do not know,
in terror of not knowing,
of the limitless, through which freefalling
forever, our dread
sinks and sinks,
or
of the violent closure of all

Yet our hope lies
in the unknown,
in our unknowing.

O deep, remote unknown,
O deep, unknown,
Have mercy upon us.

—

Kyrie eleison. *Lord, have mercy*
Christe eleison. *Christ, have mercy*
Kyrie eleison. *Lord, have mercy*

II. Gloria

Praise the wet snow
falling early.
Praise the shadow
my neighbor's chimney casts on the tile roof
even this gray October day that should, they say,
have been golden.

Praise
the invisible sun burning beyond
the white cold sky, giving us
light and the chimney's shadow
Praise
god or the gods, the unknown,
that which imagined us, which stays

our hand,
our murderer hand,
and give us
still,
in the shadow of death,
our daily life,
and the dream still
of goodwill, of peace on earth.
Praise
flow and change, night and
the pulse of day.

—

Gloria in excelsis Deo. Et in terra pax hominibus bonae
voluntatis.

Laudamus te; benedicimus te; adoramus te; glorificamus te.
Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam.

Domine Deus, Rex coelestis, Deus Pater omnipotens.
Domine Fili unigenite Jesu Christe. Domine Deus,
Agnus Dei, Filius Patris.

Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis. Qui tollis
peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem nostram. Qui
sedes ad dexteram Patris, O miserere nobis.

Quoniam tu solus Sanctus, tu solus Dominus, tu solus
altissimus, Jesu Christe. Cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria
Dei Patris.

Amen.

*Glory be to God in the highest. And on earth peace to men
of good will. We praise You; we bless You; we adore You; we
glorify You. We give You thanks for Your great glory.*

*Lord God, Heavenly King, God the Father Almighty. O
Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son. Lord God, Lamb
of God, Son of the Father.*

*You that take away the sins of the world, have mercy upon
us. You that take away the sins of the world, receive our
prayer. You that sit at the right hand of the Father, have
mercy upon us.*

*For You only are the Holy One, You alone are the Lord, You
alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ. Together with the
Holy Ghost in the glory of God the Father.*

Amen.

III. Credo

I believe the earth
exists, and
in each minim mote

of its dust the holy
glow of thy candle.

Thou
unknown I know,
thou spirit,
giver,
lover of making, of the
wrought letter,
wrought flower,
iron, deed, dream.
Dust of the earth,
help thou my
unbelief. Drift,
gray become gold, in the beam of
vision. I believe and
interrupt my belief with
doubt. I doubt and
interrupt my doubt with belief. Be,
belovéd, threatened world.

Each minim
mote.
(....)
the ordinary glow
of common dust in ancient sunlight.
Be, that I may believe. Amen.

—

Credo in unum Deum; Patrem omnipotentem, factorem
coeli et terrae

(....)
Credo in unum Dominum Jesum Christum
(....)

Crucifixus etiam pro nobis
(....)

Credo in Spiritum Sanctum

(....)

Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum et vitam
venturi saeculi. Amen.

[I believe in one God; the Father almighty, maker of
heaven and earth
(.....)

I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ

(.....)

Who was crucified for us

(.....)

I believe in the Holy Spirit

(.....)

I await the resurrection of the dead and the life of
the world to come. Amen.]

IV. Sanctus

Powers and principalities—all the gods,
angels and demigods, eloquent animals, oracles,
storms of blessing and wrath—

all that Imagination
has wrought, has rendered,
striving, in throes of epiphany—

naming, forming—to give
to the Vast Loneliness
a hearth, a locus—

send forth their song towards
the harboring silence, uttering
the ecstasy of their names, the multiform
name of the Other, the known
Unknown, unknowable:
(.....)

Blesséd is that which comes in the name of the spirit,
that which bears
the spirit within it.

The name of the spirit is written
in woodgrain, windripple, crystal,

in crystals of snow, in petal, leaf,
moss and moon, fossil and feather,

blood, bone, song, silence,
very word of
very word,
flesh and
Vision.

(.....)

Blesséd is that which utters
its being,
the stone of stone,
the straw of straw,
for there
spirit is.

(.....)

Blesséd

be the dust. From dust the world
utters itself. We have no other
hope, no knowledge.

The word

chose to become
flesh. In the blur of flesh
we bow, baffled.

—

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua.
Osanna in excelsis.
Benedictus qui venit

in nomine Domini.
Osanna in excelsis.

*Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes
in the name of the Lord
Hosanna in the highest.*

V. Agnus Dei

(.....)

What terror lies concealed
in strangest words, O lamb
of God that taketh away
the Sins of the World:

(.....)

God then,
encompassing all this, is
defenseless? Omnipotence
has been tossed away, reduced
to a wisp of damp wool

(.....)

we
must protect this perversely weak
animal, whose muzzle's nudgings
suppose there is milk to be found in us?
Must hold to our icy hearts
a shivering God?

So be it.

Come, rag of pungent
quiverings,

dim star.

Let's try
if something human still
can shield you,
spark
of remote light.

—

Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona nobis pacem.

*Lamb of God
who takes away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God
who takes away the sins of the world,
grant us peace.*

*—“Mass for the Day of St. Thomas Didymus” by Denise Levertov. From
Candles in Babylon, copyright ©1982 by Denise Levertov. Reprinted by
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spiralling ecstatically

music by James Primosch

words by e.e. cummings (1894-1962)

*Premiered by Emmanuel Music, Craig Smith conducting, at
Emmanuel Church, Boston MA, December 6, 1998.*

from spiralling ecstatically this

proud nowhere of earth's most prodigious night
blossoms a newborn babe: around him, eyes
—gifted with every keener appetite
than mere unmiracle can quite appease—
humbly in their imagined bodies kneel
(over time space doom dream while floats the whole

perhapsless mystery of paradise)

mind without soul may blast some universe

to might have been, and stop ten thousand stars
but not one heartbeat of this child; nor shall
even prevail a million questionings
against the silence of his mother's smile

—whose only secret all creation sings

—from spiralling ecstatically this by *e.e. cummings* @ 1962 *Harcourt Brace Jovanovich*. Used by permission.

Two Arms of the Harbor

music by *James Primosch*

words by *Thomas Merton (1915-1968)*

Premiered by *Emmanuel Music*, *Ryan Turner* conducting, at *Emmanuel Church, Boston MA, May 1, 2011*

I dreamt I was lost in a great city and was walking "toward the center" without quite knowing where I was going. Suddenly I came to a dead end, but on a height, looking at a great bay, an arm of the harbor. I saw a whole section of the city spread out before me on hills covered with light snow, and realized that, though I had far to go, I knew where I was: because in this city there are two arms of the harbor and they help you to find your way, as you are always encountering them.

—from *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* by *Thomas Merton*, copyright © 1965, 1966 by the *Abbey of Gethsemani*. Used with permission of the *Merton Legacy Trust*.

One with the Darkness, One with the Light

music by *James Primosch*

words by *Wendell Berry (b. 1934)*

Premiered by *Emmanuel Music*, *Craig Smith* conducting, at *Emmanuel Church, Boston MA, May 14, 2006*

At night make me one with the darkness.
In the morning make me one with the light.
When I rise up, let me rise joyful like a bird.
When I fall, let me fall without regret, like a leaf.
Let me wake in the night and hear it raining and go back to sleep.

—Excerpted from "*Prayers and Sayings of the Mad Farmer*" in the volume *Collected Poems* by *Wendell Berry* © 1970, 1984 *Farrar, Strauss and Giroux*. Used with permission.

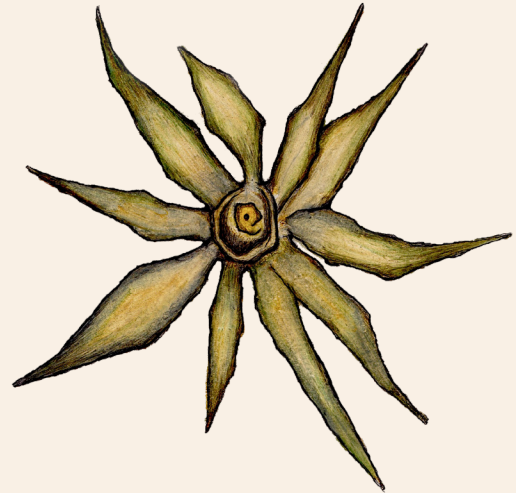




PHOTO: DEBORAH BOARDMAN

JAMES PRIMOSCH

When honoring him with its Goddard Lieberman Fellowship, the American Academy of Arts and Letters noted that “A rare economy of means and a strain of religious mysticism distinguish the music of James Primosch... Through articulate, transparent textures, he creates a wide range of musical emotion.”

Primosch’s compositional voice encompasses a broad range of expressive types. His music can be intensely lyrical, as in the song cycle *Holy the Firm* (composed for Dawn Upshaw) or dazzlingly angular as in *Secret Geometry* for piano and electronic sound. His affection for jazz is reflected in works like the Piano Quintet, while his work as a church musician informs the many pieces in his catalog based on sacred songs or religious texts. Primosch’s instrumental, vocal, and electronic works have been performed throughout the United States and in Europe by such ensembles as the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Collage, the New York New Music Ensemble, and the 21st Century Consort.

Among the honors he has received are a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Guggenheim Fellowship, three prizes from the American Academy-Institute of Arts and Letters, a Regional Artists Fellowship to the American Academy in Rome, a Pew Fellowship in the Arts, the Stoeger Prize of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and a fellowship to the Tanglewood Music Center where he studied with John Harbison. Recordings of 25 compositions by Primosch have appeared on the Albany, Azica, Bard, Bridge, CRI, Centaur, Innova, and New World labels.

Born in Cleveland OH in 1956, James Primosch studied at Cleveland State University, the University of Pennsylvania, and Columbia University. He counts Mario Davidovsky, George Crumb, and Richard Wernick among his principal teachers. Since 1988, he has served on the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania. jamesprimosch.com



PHOTO: BECKY OEHLERS

DONALD NALLY

conducts The Crossing, the internationally acclaimed, GRAMMY Award-winning professional choir that commissions, premieres, and records only new music. He holds the John W. Beattie Chair of Music at Northwestern University where he is director of choral organizations. Donald has served as chorus master at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Welsh National Opera, Opera Philadelphia, and for many seasons at the Spoleto Festival in Italy. He has commissioned over 120 works and, with The Crossing, has produced 20 recordings, winning two GRAMMY Awards. He was the American Composers Forum 2017 Champion of New Music and received the 2017 Michael Korn Founders Award from Chorus America; his ensembles have twice received the Margaret Hillis Award for Excellence in Choral Music. Donald has worked closely with the artists Allora & Calzadilla and composer David Lang on projects in London, Osaka, Cleveland, Edmonton, Houston, and Philadelphia. In recent seasons he has been a visiting resident artist at the Park Avenue Armory, music director for the world premiere of Lang’s *The Mile-Long Opera* – directing 1000 voices on the High Line in Manhattan – as well as chorus master at the New York Philharmonic for world premieres by Lang and Julia Wolfe.

THE COMPOSER ACKNOWLEDGES John Harbison’s generous invitation to compose for Emmanuel Church, without which this body of work would not have been created.

WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR:

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