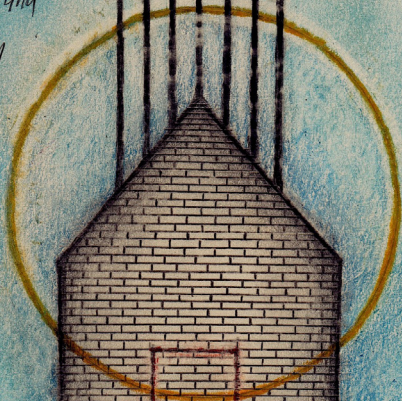


*The Tower and
the Garden*



*garden
-H-*

*The Crossing
Donald Wally*

THE TOWER AND THE GARDEN

Notes & Lyrics

A child said, what is the grass?

music by Toivo Tuulev (b. 1958)

words by Walt Whitman (1819-1892)

Commissioned by The Crossing and Donald Nally for The Month of Moderns and premiered June 21, 2015, at The Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill.

A child said, What is the grass? fetching it to me with full hands;
How could I answer the child? . . . I do not know what it is any more than he.

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green stuff woven.

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,
A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropped,
Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners, that we may see and remark, and say Whose?

Or I guess the grass is itself a child. . . [the produced babe of the vegetation.]

Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic,
And it means, [Sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow zones,
Growing among black folks as among white,
Kanuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff, I give them the same, I receive them the same.]

And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves.

Tenderly will I use you curling grass,
It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men, It

may be if I had known them I would have loved them; It may be you are from old people and from women, and from offspring taken soon out of their mothers' laps,
And here you are the mothers' laps.

This grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old mothers,
Darker than the colorless beards of old men,
[Dark to come from under the faint red roofs of mouths.

O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues!
And I perceive they do not come from the roofs of mouths for nothing.

I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young men and women,
And the hints about old men and mothers, and the offspring taken soon out of their laps.]

What do you think has become of the young and old men?
What do you think has become of the women and children?

They are alive and well somewhere;
The smallest sprouts show there is really no death,
And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait at the end to arrest it,
And ceased the moment life appeared.

All goes onward and outward. . . and nothing collapses,
And to die is different from what any one supposed, and luckier.

—from Song of Myself, *Leaves of Grass* (bracketed text omitted by the composer)

The Tower and the Garden

music by Gregory Spears (b. 1977)

words by Keith Garebian (b. 1943), Denise Levertov (1923-1997), and Thomas Merton (1915-1968)

This work was commissioned by The Crossing, Cantori New York, Notre Dame Vocale, and Volti with funding provided by The Ann Stookey Fund for New Music. www.annstookeyfund.org

a note from the composer:

The Tower and the Garden is a four-movement setting of three poems for choir and string quartet. The texts juxtapose the dangers of technological hubris (the tower) with the need for a place of refuge (the garden) in a world threatened by war and ecological disaster. Each text suggests ways in which Catholic thought and imagery might challenge the technological status quo.

The first text, poem “80” from the collection *Cables to the Ace*, was written by Trappist monk and social activist Thomas Merton. It is an eschatological meditation on the garden of Gethsemane, where Christ’s disciples slept on the eve of his crucifixion. Merton compares their slumber to society’s indifference to the destruction of our natural world by dangerous new technologies and war.

The second text was written by poet and Catholic activist Denise Levertov. It is a meditation on the Tower of Babel and the tendency for technology in the nuclear and information age to serve only its own growth and to potentially destroy society in the bargain.

The third poem, written by Keith Garebian, is an homage to queer filmmaker Derek Jarman and his cottage garden at Dungeness on the English coast. Situated precariously between a towering nuclear power plant and the sea, the garden was Jarman’s austere refuge during the final months of his struggle with AIDS. While an atheist and highly critical of the church, Jarman was intrigued by the role religious hagiography and poetry could play in his filmic indictments of Thatcher-era Britain. This is most notable in his film *The Garden*, which was shot on location in Dungeness.

The fourth movement is a more expansive setting of Merton’s poem “80” and a meditation on his larger views on technology and language. Merton saw language both as a potential garden that could bring us together in dialogue or as a vehicle for political propaganda that could tear us apart. Today, both forms of communication are increasingly being manipulated and distorted for profit by information technologies. Perhaps singing — and communal singing in particular — might allow us to step outside this technological system and reclaim communication at a moment when the digital world seems itself to be a looming Tower.

I. / IV.

Slowly slowly
Comes Christ through the garden
Speaking to the sacred trees
Their branches bear his light
Without harm

Slowly slowly
Comes Christ through the ruins
Seeking the lost disciple
A timid one
Too literate
To believe words
So he hides

Slowly slowly
Christ rises on the cornfields
It is only the harvest moon
The disciple
Turns over in his sleep
And murmurs:
“My regret!”

The disciple will awaken
When he knows history
But slowly slowly
The Lord of History
Weeps into the fire.

—“So” from *Cables to the Ace or Familiar Liturgies of Misunderstanding* by Thomas Merton (1968).
Used with permission.

II.

Each day the shadow swings
round from west to east till night overtakes it,
hiding
half the slow circle. Each year
the tower grows taller, spiralling
out of its monstrous root-circumference, ramps and
colonnades
mounting tier by lessening tier the way a searching
bird of prey wheels and mounts the sky, driven
by hungers unsated by blood and bones.
And the shadow lengthens, our homes nearby are
dark
half the day, and the bricklayers, stonemasons,
carpenters bivouac
high in the scaffolded arcades, further and further
above the ground,
weary from longer and longer comings and goings.
At times
a worksong twirls down the autumn leaf of a
phrase, but mostly
we catch
only the harsher sounds of their labor itself, and
that seems only
an echo now of the bustle and clamor there was
long ago
when the fields were cleared, the hole was dug, the
foundations laid
with boasting and fanfares, the work begun.
The tower, great circular honeycomb, rises and
rises and still
the heavens
arch above and evade it, while the great shadow
engulfs
more and more of the land, our lives
dark with the fear a day will blaze, or a full-moon
night defining

with icy brilliance the dense shade, when all the
immense
weight of this wood and brick and stone and metal
and massive
weight of dream and weight of will
will collapse, crumble, thunder and fall, fall upon us, the
dwellers in shadow.

—“In the Land of Shinar” from *Evening Train* by Denise Levertov
(1992). Used with permission.

III.

Timbers black with pitch
shiver on the shingle.
Gulls wheel,
squabble over the fishermen’s catch,
quicksilver of the sea.
The tide invades
the arid strand,
home to larks and tough grasses,
cormorants skim the waves.
A cottage with two prospects
(the old lighthouse
and nuclear plant)
both lit by sighs and sighs.
Barbed wire around your garden
cannot keep melancholy at bay.

—“Dungeness Documentary” from *Blue: The Derek Jarman Poems*
by Keith Garebian (2008). All rights reserved by the author. Used
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I enter the earth

music by Joel Puckett (b. 1977)
words spoken by Kxao =Oah of northwestern Botswana in
1971; edited by the composer

Commissioned by *The Crossing* and Donald Nally for *The Month of Moderns* and premiered by *The Crossing* on June 14, 2015, at *The Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill*. I enter the earth was made possible by the *Dale Warland Singers Commission Award* presented by *Chorus America*, funded by the *American Composers Forum*.

When people sing ... I enter the earth. I go in at a place like
the place where people drink water. I travel a long way, very
far. When I emerge, I am already climbing. I climb threads.
I climb one and leave it.

...

When you arrive at God’s place, you make yourself small. ...
You do what you have to do there.

...

Then you return to where everyone is, and you hide your
face. You hide your face so you won’t see. ... And then you
come and come and come and finally you enter your body
again. All ... who have stayed behind are waiting for you.
They fear you.

...

You enter, enter the earth, and you return to enter the skin
of your body ... Then you ... sing.

—excerpted from “Folklore and ritual of !Kung hunter gatherers,”
Ph.D. Dissertation, Dept. of Anthropology, Harvard University @ 1975
Marguerite Anne Biesele (current pen name Megan Biesele) and used
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who has granted permission to set and reprint these words. She asks
that anyone moved by them consider making a donation to:

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The image is an abstract artwork on a light blue, textured background. It features several clusters of colorful splatters and drips in shades of red, orange, yellow, green, and white. A prominent feature is a red circle on the right side, which contains a faint, circular pattern. The text 'THE CROSSING' is centered in the middle of the image in a white, serif font.

THE CROSSING

BIOGRAPHIES

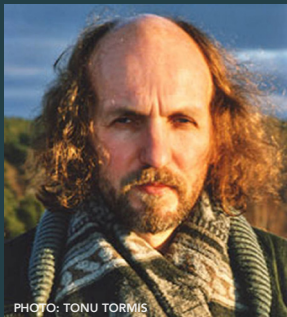


PHOTO: TONU TORMIS

TOIVO TULEV is head of the Composition Department at the Estonian Academy of Music. His teachers have included Eino Tamberg and the Swedish composer Sven-David Sandström; and during 1996 he studied electro-acoustic music at the Cologne Hochschule der Musik. But he also acknowledges the strong musical influence and encouragement of people such as Tõnu Kaljuste and Erkki-Sven Tüür, and the experience of singing in various early music vocal ensembles like Vox Clamantis, Chœur Grégorien de Paris and Heinavanker. He is the founder (1995) and artistic director of the liturgical music ensemble Scandicus. emic.ee/toivo-tulev

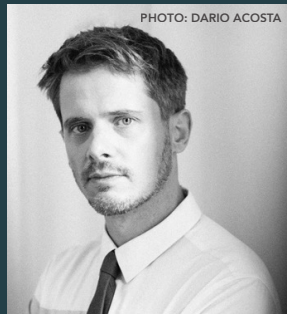


PHOTO: DARIO ACOSTA

GREGORY SPEARS is a New York-based composer whose music has been called “astonishingly beautiful” (The New York Times), “coolly entrancing” (The New Yorker), and “some of the most beautifully unsettling music to appear in recent memory” (The Boston Globe). In recent seasons he has been commissioned by The Lyric Opera of Chicago, Cincinnati Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Seraphic Fire, The Crossing, Volti, BMI/Concert Artists Guild, Vocal Arts DC, New York Polyphony, The New York International Piano Competition, and the JACK Quartet among others.

Other commissions have come from The Five Boroughs Music Festival, OPERA America, poet Tracy K. Smith, Christopher Williams Dances (Requiem), the Dalton School Orchestra, Houston Grand Opera, pianist Marika Bournaki, the Present Music Ensemble, New Vintage Baroque,

the Damask Ensemble, and the Greater Princeton Youth Orchestra. He has been an artist-in-residence at Yaddo, MacDowell, the Aaron Copland House, the Rauschenberg Residency at Captiva Island, and was a participant in American Opera Projects' Composers and the Voice program. He holds degrees in composition from Eastman School of Music (B.M.), Yale School of Music (M.M.), and Princeton (Ph.D.). He also studied as a Fulbright Scholar at the Royal Danish Academy in Copenhagen with Hans Abrahamsen. He currently teaches composition at Purchase College (SUNY). His music is published by Schott Music and Schott PSNY. gregoryspears.com



PHOTO: KORY CHASE

JOEL PUCKETT is a composer leaving both audiences and the press buzzing. His music has been described as, “soaringly lyrical” (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*), “Puccini-esque” (*Wall Street Journal*), and “containing a density within a clarity, polyphony within the simple and—most importantly—beautiful and seemingly spiritual.” (*Audiophile Audition*). Parterre Box recently proclaimed, “Puckett should be a household name” and the *Philadelphia Inquirer's* David Patrick Stearns mused, “if the name Joel Puckett isn't etched into your brain, it should be.” In 2011 *NPR Music* listed him as one of the top 100 composers under 40 in the world.

Currently the Chair of Music Theory, Ear Training, and Piano Skills at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, Puckett presents workshops nationwide and frequently serves as an adjudicator at competitions for rising composers. His music is represented worldwide by Bill Holab Music. joelpuckett.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.

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...for composers trying to make sense of things through creating;

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...to St. Thomas' Church, Whitmarsh, for generously providing additional rehearsal space: Michael Smith, Minister of Music;

...to St. Clement's Church, Philadelphia, for also generously providing additional rehearsal space: Fr. Richard C. Alton, Rector; Bernard Kunkle, Associate Organist and Secretary to the Rector; Peter Conte, Organist and Choirmaster;

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