

# Texts

## Woodland Notes, by Vartan Aghababian

### Text by H.C. "Pop" Blanchard

#### I. Wild Geese

Fly! *Wild Geese*, -- fly!

Honking harbingers of Spring.

In V formation, fly!

An omen of new days, you bring remembrances of other Springs,

Refreshing faith in Nature's things.

Throughout March winds, and fog, and storms,

Coruscant sun, cloud-cluster storms

I spy you in the March gray sky –

The break of Spring is drawing nigh.

Fly! Big *gray geese*, fly!

Husky harbingers of Spring,

In VICTORY V, fly high!

#### II. A Ring on the Moon

There's a ring on the moon.

A grey, faded ring,

And the winds of the night are warm.

There are clouds to the south,

A dark, billowed bank,

And the sunset warned of a storm.

There's a lull in the breeze,

Ominous, still:

Then a weird and distant purr.

It sweeps though the pines,

With a breath that is cool,

And the tall tops begin to stir.

There's a ring on the moon,

A grey, faded ring,

And the signs of the season spell rain --

And I listen and wait,

A bit lonesome, too,

For the rain on my roof once again.

#### III. Nature-wise

I cannot see the scented winds that blow

From all the wooded hills, and yet I feel

Their soft caresses. Instinctively, I know

The scenes of beauty where they stoop to steal

The fragrance brought to me.

#### IV. The Cabin Fireside

I've worked to build

A cabin in the pines –

A solid cabin

Of norways and of stone,

Substantial as the trees,

Comfortable and cozy.

Therein the wealth

Of friendship

Accumulates

Beside the evening fire,

As pine and oak  
Blend their perfumes  
Upon the andirons.  
It is a place  
To live the simple life,  
Partake of dreams  
And share the good  
That comes from God  
Through friends beside  
The cabin fireside.

**A Wren, by Howard Frazin**  
**Text by Denise Levertov**

Quiet among the leaves, a wren,  
fearless as if I were invisible  
or moved with a silence like its own.  
From bush to bush  
it flies without hesitation,  
no flutter or whirring of wings.  
I feel myself lifted,  
lightened, dispersed:  
it has turned me to air,  
it can fly right through me.

**Winter Trees, by David Biedenbender**  
**Text by William Carlos Williams**

All the complicated details  
of the attiring and  
the disattiring are completed!  
A liquid moon  
moves gently among  
the long branches.  
Thus having prepared their buds  
against a sure winter  
the wise trees  
stand sleeping in the cold.

**Amplification, by Griffin Candey**  
**Text by Susan Gordon Ramsay**

There's no need to be sentimental. Call the heart a lamp burning whale oil or kerosene, clean, bright enough for needlework or reading. Not feeble, not dim, but certainly domestic. Outside, the night bulges with danger, both the prowling, predatory, coming-to-get-you type and the rooted, the lurking, the submerged, to rip the delicate bellies of boats. And the heart, we've said, is a lamp. Then certain people, particular jigs of the pulse, some speeds of breathing, create around the heart a Fresnel lens, a system of prisms and mirrors twelve feet high, which reflects, refracts and magnifies that lamp as it floats frictionless on quicksilver, turning, dervish repeating a circuit of joy. Its light now visible twelve miles out to sea.

**Living in Light, by Heather Gilligan**  
**Text by Sara Teasdale**

I. Buried Love

I have come to bury Love  
Beneath a tree,  
In the forest tall and black  
Where none can see.

I shall put no flowers at his head,  
Nor stone at his feet,  
For the mouth I loved so much  
Was bittersweet.

I shall go no more to his grave,  
For the woods are cold.  
I shall gather as much of joy  
As my hands can hold.

I shall stay all day in the sun  
Where the wide winds blow,  
But oh, I shall cry at night  
When none will know.

II. I Shall Not Care

When I am dead and over me bright April  
Shakes out her rain-drenched hair,  
Though you should lean above me broken-hearted,  
I shall not care.

I shall have peace, as leafy trees are peaceful  
When rain bends down the bough,  
And I shall be more silent and cold-hearted  
Than you are now.

III. June Night

Oh Earth, you are too dear to-night,  
How can I sleep while all around  
Floats rainy fragrance and the far  
Deep voice of the ocean that talks to the ground?

Oh Earth, you gave me all I have,  
I love you, I love you, oh what have I  
That I can give you in return  
Except my body after I die?

IV. A Little While

A little while when I am gone  
My life will live in music after me,  
As spun foam lifted and borne on  
After the wave is lost in the full sea.

A while these nights and days will burn  
In song with the bright frailty of foam,  
Living in light before they turn  
Back to the nothingness that is their home.

## **Peonies, by Elena Ruehr**

**Text by Jim Harrison**

The peonies, too heavy with their beauty,  
slump to the ground. I had hoped  
they would live forever but ever so slowly  
day by day they're becoming the soil of their birth  
with a faint tang of deliquescence about them.  
Next June they'll somehow remember to come alive again,  
a little trick we have or have not learned.

## **The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald**

**By Gordon Lightfoot, arranged by Rick Robinson**

The legend lives on from the Chippewa on down  
Of the big lake they called 'gitche gumee'  
The lake, it is said, never gives up her dead  
When the skies of November turn gloomy  
With a load of iron ore twenty-six thousand tons more  
Than the Edmund Fitzgerald weighed empty  
That good ship and crew was a bone to be chewed  
When the gales of November came early.  
The wind in the wires made a tattle-tale sound  
And a wave broke over the railing  
And every man knew, as the captain did too,  
T'was the witch of November come stealin'  
When afternoon came it was with freezin' rain  
Into a hurricane.  
When supertime came, the old cook came on deck sayin'  
Fellas, it's too rough to feed ya  
At seven pm a main hatchway caved in, he said  
Fellas, it's been good t'know ya  
The captain wired in he had water comin' in  
And the good ship and crew was in peril  
And later that night when his lights went outta sight  
Came the wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald  
Where does the love of God go when the pain drags on?  
And all that remains is the faces and the names  
Of the wives and the sons and the daughters.  
Redford (for Yia-Yia and Pappou)  
By Sufjan Stevens, arranged by Mark David Buckles

## **For the Widows in Paradise, for the fatherless in Ypsilanti**

**By Sufjan Stevens, arranged by Mark David Buckles**

I have called you children, I have called you son  
What is there to answer if I'm the only one?  
Morning comes in Paradise, morning comes in light  
Still I must obey, still I must invite  
If there's anything to say, if there's anything to do  
If there's any other way, I'll do anything for you

I was dressed embarrassment  
I was dressed in wine  
If you had a part of me, will you take your time?

Even if I come back, even if I die  
Is there some idea to replace my life?  
Like a father to impress  
Like a mother's mourning dress  
If you ever make a mess, I'll do anything for you

I have called you preacher, I have called you son  
If you have a father or if you haven't one  
I'll do anything for you, I'll do anything for you

## Biographies

Composer **Vartan Aghababian** (b. 1964, Detroit, Michigan) began piano studies at the age of eight and soon after started composing. His grammar school years of music study were infused with Orff *Schulwerke* and Dalcroze Eurhythmics; in the years that followed, his private studies were augmented to include the recorder, the oboe and English Horn, voice and dance. His experience includes performances in choirs, orchestras, wind ensembles as well as many solo and chamber performances. He studied with William Bolcom and Leslie Bassett during his undergraduate years (BM, 1987) at the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor, MI) and afterwards with James Hartway at Wayne State University (Detroit, MI). After receiving a diploma in film scoring (1992) from the Berklee College of Music (Boston, MA), he moved to Los Angeles pursue a career as a film music editor with Warner Brothers Studios (Burbank, CA). Following the two years in southern California, he returned to Boston to work as a freelance composer, scoring short documentary films and composing on commission. He completed his master's degree in composition (MM, 2002) at the Longy School of Music (Cambridge, MA) studying with Eric Sawyer. He completed his doctoral studies in composition at Boston University (DMA, 2008) studying with Samuel Headrick. His music has been performed across the United States, in Asia and Europe. Currently, Dr. Aghababian is a member of the music theory and composition faculties at Boston University (Boston, MA), the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Cambridge, MA), the South Shore Conservatory (Hingham, MA) and at the Winchester Community Music School (Winchester, MA); he directs a chamber orchestra at the Winchester Community Music School. He is a three year former member of the faculty at the Boston University Academy (Boston, MA) and a twelve year former faculty member at the Longy School of Music (Cambridge, MA). He was the Composer in Residence for the vocal ensemble *Recuerdo* (Cambridge, MA) for seven years. He teaches privately, lectures publicly and continues to compose on commission.

Composer **David Biedenbender's** music has been described as "simply beautiful" [[twincities.com](http://twincities.com)] and is noted for its "rhythmic intensity" [NewMusicBox] and "stirring harmonies" [Boston Classical Review]. "Modern, venturesome, and inexorable...The excitement, intensity, and freshness that characterizes Biedenbender's music hung in the [air] long after the last note was played" [[Examiner.com](http://Examiner.com)]. David has written music for the concert stage as well as for dance and multimedia collaborations, and his work is often influenced by his diverse musical experiences in rock and jazz bands as an electric bassist, in wind, jazz, and New Orleans-style brass bands as a euphonium, bass trombone, and tuba player, and by his study of Indian Carnatic Music. His present creative interests include working with everyone from classically trained musicians to improvisers, acoustic chamber music to large ensembles, and interactive electronic interfaces to live brain data. He has had the privilege of collaborating with and being commissioned by many talented performers and ensembles, including Alarm Will Sound, PRISM Saxophone Quartet, Stenhammar String Quartet, New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, U.S. Navy Band, Philharmonie Baden-Baden (Germany), VocalEssence, and Eastman Wind Ensemble, among many others.

He is currently Assistant Professor of Composition in the College of Music at Michigan State University. He holds degrees in composition from the University of Michigan and Central Michigan University, and has also studied at the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study, the Aspen Music Festival, and in Mysore, India where he studied carnatic music. For more information, visit: [www.davidbiedenbender.com](http://www.davidbiedenbender.com).

**Mark David Buckles** is a conductor, composer, singer, music educator, and multi-instrumentalist. Mark David's many roles include serving as the Director of Music at Arlington Street Church in Boston, Music Director of The Sanctuary Boston, and Lecturer of Music Theory at MIT.

In addition, Mark David is both a prolific composer and arranger of choral, vocal, and instrumental music, and an acclaimed performer and worship leader, leading worship and music services throughout the country with his reverent spirit and infectious energy.

When he is not making music and/or spending time with his amazing daughter, Mark David enjoys chess, hiking, bread, and geocaching.

**Griffin Candey** (b. 1988) is an American opera composer dutifully committed to creating vocal and theatrical works that, by approaching forward-thinking subject matter, aim to both expand and preserve those genres.

At the core of Candey's vocal music is a level of practical vocal finesse that vocalists and interpreters praise for its "prosody that showcases both the words and the singers," its "intuitive rhythm," and its "lyricism and emotional depth."

Candey's latest opera, *Sweets by Kate* – described as "hilarious and moving," "a piece with charming and elaborate complexity," and "a meaningful and beautiful work of art" – was recently chosen for the 2017 line-up of Fort Worth Opera's Frontiers Festival. The comic chamber work was commissioned and premiered by the Midwest Institute of Opera (July 2015,) with subsequent productions at Marble City Opera of Knoxville, TN (May 2016) and at OperaRox Productions (July 2017.) 2017 and 2018 will also see the premieres of a broad range of vocal works – chamber song cycles for the Seen / Heard Trio, for Brooke Larimer and the BEO String Quartet, for Hillary LaBonte and the Mid-American Center for Contemporary Music, for San Francisco's Ann Moss, as well as chamber operas for both Marble City Opera and for Cleveland Opera Theater (in conjunction with Baldwin-Wallace College.)

The music of **Howard Frazin** has been called "genuinely touching" by the *Dallas Morning News* and "clear in design ... ingeniously scored ... with an almost unbearable poignancy" by *The Boston Globe*. His works are commissioned and performed by many leading ensembles including A Far Cry, Boston Classical Orchestra, Claremont Trio, Florestan Recital Project, Lorelei Ensemble, Lydian String Quartet, and Triple Helix, and programmed at festivals including Tanglewood, Aspen, Banff, Rockport, Monadnock, Bowdoin, Kneisel Hall, and Yellow Barn. His works are published by Edition Peters and recorded on Ravello Records and MSR Classics.

Mr. Frazin's oratorio *The Voice of Isaac*—a retelling of the Abraham and Isaac story from Isaac's perspective—was commissioned by PALS Children's Chorus and premiered at Boston's Jordan Hall in 2003, and recently performed by Coro Allegro at Sanders Theatre in April 2016. Recent orchestral works include *In the Forests of the Night*, originally commissioned and premiered by the Boston Classical Orchestra, with subsequent performances by multiple orchestras across the United States, and programmed this season by Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra for April 2017. Upcoming projects include a viola concerto in March 2017 for Kim Kashkashian and the Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms Society, as well as a song cycle in collaboration with the poet Donald Hall, and a new string quartet for Boston's Arneis Quartet.

Mr. Frazin is co-founder and artistic director of WordSong and has taught composition at the New England Conservatory and the Longy School of Music. He was a composition student of Dominick Argento, and currently serves as Composer-in-Residence with the Bach, Beethoven and Brahms Society.

**Heather Gilligan's** music has been described as honest, direct, and compassionate while exploring emotions from humor to anguish. In April 2017, her album *Living in Light* was released by Albany Records. A collaborative project with soprano Margot Rood, the debut album features six of Heather's vocal chamber works, scored for soprano with varied instrumentation including string quartet, percussion, saxophone, trumpet, and piano. Other recent successes include premieres of her choral, wind band, and orchestral music at the New York Choral Festival in Carnegie Hall and the Washington D.C. International Music Festival at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Her award-winning work for solo flute, published in the 2015 *SCI Journal of Music Scores*, was chosen for performance by the College Music Society and by the University of Nebraska's New Music Festival. Heather has recently written works for American Modern Ensemble, the East Winds Quintet, the Arneis String Quartet, Lorelei Ensemble, the Chamber Singers of Keene, Anthology vocal quartet, and Ensemble 451. In 2010, she was named Composer of the Year by the New Hampshire Music Educators Association. Over the past decade, she has served as a member of the Boston Composers Coalition, a group of seven composers dedicated to the creation, performance, education, and dissemination of new American music.

Heather serves as Chair of the Keene State College Music Department; oversees the areas of composition, theory, and aural skills; teaches Composition, Music Theory I-IV, Counterpoint, and Analytical Techniques; and is the co-founder and co-director of "Currants," the department's Contemporary Ensemble. Heather received her DMA in Composition from Boston University and her MM from the Longy School of Music. She also holds a BS in Chemistry from Lehigh University.

**Rick Robinson** began playing double bass in Highland Park public schools until he attended Interlochen Arts Academy, Cleveland Institute of Music and New England Conservatory. He held several principal positions in regional orchestras as well as the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra under John Williams before joining the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in 1989. During his 22-year tenure he began transcribing symphonic works for a mixed octet he called CutTime Players. He later began composing for a string sextet called CutTime Simfonica and presenting them amplified in non-traditional venues as part of the Classical Revolution movement. Dedicated to spreading the gospel of classical music, he resigned from the DSO in 2013 to connect with a wider community to classical in bold new ways. He's won a Kresge Fellowship and a Knight Arts Challenge grant for what has become a mission-enterprise. While all of his music is neo-romantic, several works blend with urban pop as a fun way to draw new listeners. Read more at [cuttime.com](http://cuttime.com).

With work described as “sumptuously scored and full of soaring melodies” (The New York Times), and “unspeakably gorgeous” (Gramophone), American composer **Elena Ruehr** is known for her lyrical and rhythmically vibrant music. Her music has an organic, breathing flow, derived from its origin in the movement of the body and the vitality of the natural world; her melodies often incorporate details and figurations of improvised performance, sometimes with exotic touches. Ruehr says of her music “the idea is that the surface be simple, the structure complex.”

An award-winning faculty member at MIT since 1992, she has been a Guggenheim fellow, a fellow at Harvard’s Radcliffe Institute, and was the first composer-in-residence with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project (BMOP) from 2000-2005, where the orchestra premiered her pieces *Shimmer*, *Sky Above Clouds*, *Ladder to the Moon*, as well as her acclaimed opera *Toussaint Before the Spirits* in collaboration with Opera Boston (Arsis Records, 2005). BMOP also released a recording of her complete orchestral works (*O’Keeffe Images*) in 2014.

Ruehr’s oeuvre includes compositions for chamber ensemble, orchestra, chorus, wind ensemble, instrumental solo, opera, dance and silent film. Her six string quartets have been championed by the Cypress, Biava, Borromeo, Lark, ROCO and Shanghai string quartets. In addition, she has written works for Cantata Singers, Roomful of Teeth, the Metamorphosen Chamber Ensemble, the San Jose Chamber Orchestra, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, the Rockport Chamber Music Society, The Richmond Philharmonic, Lorelei, and many others. She has also written two scores for silent films: *Manhattan Trade School for Girls* and *Deschutes Driftwood*.

In addition to her work with BMOP, her recordings include *Lift* (Avie Records, 2015) *Averno* (Avie Records, Trinity Choir, 2012), *How She Danced: String Quartets of Elena Ruehr* (Cypress String Quartet, 2010), and *Jane Wang considers the dragonfly* (Albany, various artists, 2009). Ruehr’s pieces are often inspired or suggested by work from other artistic spheres, and she is known for her collaborations with the writers Louise Glück, Elizabeth Alexander, Margaret Atwood, Ann Patchett, Gretchen Henderson and Adrienne Rich, among others. Ruehr grew up in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula near the shore of Lake Superior.

**Daniel Doña** has distinguished himself as an active performer and pedagogue. Daniel serves on the viola faculty of Boston University alongside his duties as Assistant Chair of the String Department, Coordinator of String Chamber Music, and Lecturer of String Pedagogy and String Literature. He has also taught at the Boston University Tanglewood Institute String Quartet Workshop and the Apple Hill Center for Chamber Music. Dr. Doña is a member of the prizewinning Arneis Quartet.

Performance highlights include appearances at the Beijing Modern Music Festival, Music on Main (Vancouver) and Stanford University’s Lively Arts series as well as broadcasts on CBC Radio 2, WGBH and WCLV. Dr. Doña also performs regularly with the Orchestra of Emmanuel Music and other ensembles in the Boston area. He has presented guest masterclasses at the University of Connecticut, Swarthmore College, Northwestern University Music Academy and Miami University.

Daniel pursues interdisciplinary projects with a passion. In 2014 he received a Humanities Enhancement Project Award from the Boston University Center for the Humanities to curate a concert series exploring relationships between poetry and music. As a member of the Banff Festival Quartet he performed in collaboration with dancers, presenting Hans van Manen’s *Grosse Fuge* and a world premiere of Heather Myers’s *Dedications*. An enthusiastic advocate of new music, he has commissioned and premiered works by Aaron Travers and Orianna Webb.

Dr. Doña received his AB in Philosophy from the University of Chicago, where he was awarded the inaugural David Fulton Award for excellence in instrumental performance. He received his MM in Viola Performance from the University of Oklahoma where he studied with Matthew Dane (viola) and Felicia Moye (violin). At Boston University he studied with Michelle LaCourse, Steven Ansell and Ed Gazouleas. He received his PD and DMA from BU and was a two-time recipient of the String Department Award.

American contralto **Emily Marvosh** has been gaining recognition for her “sterling voice,” and “graceful allure,” on the stages of Carnegie Hall, Jordan Hall, Disney Hall, Lincoln Center, Prague’s Smetana Hall, and Vienna’s Stefansdom. Following her solo debut at Boston’s Symphony Hall in 2011, she has been a frequent soloist with the Handel and Haydn Society under the direction of Harry Christophers. Other recent solo appearances include the American Bach Soloists (*Messiah*), Charlotte Symphony (*Messiah*), Tucson Symphony Orchestra (Mahler’s 3<sup>rd</sup> *Symphony*), Chorus Pro Musica (Stravinsky’s *Les Noces*), Music Worcester (Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony), L’academie (Vivaldi’s *Nisi Dominus*), Back Bay Chorale (Bach *Magnificat*), the Brookline Symphony (*Sea Pictures*), the Boston Early Music Festival Fringe, and the Chorus of Westerly (Dvořak *Stabat Mater*), she is often featured on the Music at Marsh Bach Cantata Series. Awards include the prestigious Adams Fellowship at the Carmel Bach Festival (2013), the American Prize in the Oratorio and Art Song divisions (2013), and second place in the New England Regional NATSAA competition (2014).

Her contributions to 21<sup>st</sup> century repertoire and performance include world premiere performances with Juventas New Music and the Manchester Summer Chamber Music Festival, and in 2013, Miss Marvosh created the roles of Viviane and the Mother in the world premiere of Hugo Kauder’s *Merlin* with the Hugo Kauder Society. She is a founding member of the Lorelei Ensemble, which promotes innovative new music for women. With Lorelei, she has enjoyed collaborations with composer David Lang, the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Of a recent Lorelei performance, one critic wrote,

“Marvosh, whose stage presence was a joy to behold, offered a tone that had the velvety soulfulness of a cello...and lent a refreshing pious solemnity to this more joyful of Mass texts.”

Ensemble appearances in the past and upcoming seasons include the Oregon Bach Festival under the direction of Helmut Rilling, the Bachakademie Stuttgart, Portland Baroque Orchestra, True Concord Voices and Orchestra, Boston Camerata, the Skylark Chamber Ensemble, the Yale Choral Artists, and Cambridge Concentus. Miss Marvosh can be heard on two recent GRAMMY-nominated recordings: Brahms's *Ein Deutsches Requiem* with Seraphic Fire, and *Prayers and Remembrances* with True Concord Voices and Orchestra. She holds degrees from Central Michigan University and Boston University. [www.emilymarvosh.com](http://www.emilymarvosh.com)

**Patrick Owen**, DMA, is a native of Midland, Michigan, where, as the oldest of four sons in a Catholic family, he was always surrounded by music. Mr. Owen has served as Assistant Principal Cellist for the Charlotte Symphony, Colorado Festival Orchestra, and Boston Philharmonic. He has been a guest artist with the Charlotte Chamber Music Society, Classicopia, Boston Chamber Music Society, and the Duxbury Music Festival. While on faculty at Northeastern University, Mr. Owen worked closely with composer Anthony DeRitis on new music for cello, including *Sheng* (2011), for cello and electronic media. Mr. Owen studied with Pamela Frame at the Eastman School of Music, Harvey Shapiro and James Kreger at The Juilliard School, with Philippe Muller at the Paris Conservatory, and completed a doctorate in 2007 with Andres Diaz at Boston University.

**Margot Rood**, hailed for her “luminosity and grace” by The New York Times, performs a wide range of repertoire across North American stages.

Following her solo debut at Boston’s Symphony Hall in 2011, she has been a frequent soloist with Handel and Haydn Society under the direction of conductor Harry Christophers. Recent and upcoming solo appearances include Cleveland Orchestra (Stravinsky's *Threni*), Boston Symphony (Benjamin's *Dream of the Song*), Rhode Island Philharmonic (Messiah); New World Symphony (Reich's *Desert Music*); Handel and Haydn Society (Messiah, Vivaldi Gloria, Bach Mass in B Minor); Seraphic Fire (Messiah, Vivaldi Gloria, Mozart Requiem); Bach Collegium San Diego (Messiah); *A Far Cry* (Golijov's *Three Songs*); Oratorio Chorale (Brahms Requiem); Kent Singers (Brahms Requiem); True Concord Voices and Orchestra (Bach St. John Passion and Mozart C Minor Mass); Back Bay Chorale (Bach St. John Passion); Brookline Symphony (Mahler Fourth Symphony); and various concerts with acclaimed renaissance ensemble Blue Heron. Ms. Rood was awarded 3rd place in the 2016 American Prize Competition (Oratorio and Art Song division) and was named a 2015-2016 Lorraine Hunt Lieberson Fellow at Emmanuel Music, where she is often featured on Emmanuel's nationally-known Bach cantata series.

Recent and upcoming stage appearances include *La Renommée* in Lalande's *Les Fontaines de Verailles* with Boston Early Music Festival, *Hyacinthus* in Mozart's *Apollo und Hyacinthus* with Emmanuel Music, *Amor* in Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* with Grand Harmonie, Emily Webb in Rorem's *Our Town* with Monadnock Music, *Johanna* in Sweeney Todd with St. Petersburg Opera, the title role in Handel's *Esther* with Handel and Haydn Society, and Ramiro in Helios Early Opera's production of Cavalli's *Artemisia*. In addition to opera and oratorio, Ms. Rood has performed as soloist with some of the United States' premiere new music ensembles, and was a 2015 recipient of the St. Botolph Club Foundation's Emerging Artist Award for her work in new music. Notable recent engagements include her Carnegie Hall debut in the world premiere of Shawn Jaeger's *Letters Made with Gold*, Kati Agocs' *Vessel* and Arvo Pärt's *Passio* with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project. Ms. Rood is a core member of Boston's Lorelei Ensemble, an all-female vocal ensemble dedicated to the performance of new music, and is a founding member of the Michigan Recital Project, which features commissions by emerging composers. Also sought after as a collaborator, Ms. Rood has been invited by composers at Columbia University, University of Pennsylvania, McGill University, University of Louisville and Keene State College for performances and masterclasses. Her new recording with composer Heather Gilligan, *Living in Light*, is now available from Albany Records. Ms. Rood holds degrees from the University of Michigan and McGill University.

# Notes

## **Woodland Notes, by Vartan Aghababian**

It was with great pleasure and honor that I received the commission from Emily Marvosh and the Michigan Recital Project to compose vocal chamber music for her and her colleagues. Not only was this a commission from a respected peer but it came with a mutual, special affinity for and strong loyalty to our home state of Michigan. I myself left Michigan after my undergraduate education at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, moved to Boston, to Los Angeles and two years later moved back to Boston, hoping not to depart again. I have lived in Boston close to twenty-five years since moving there, a length of time equal to the years I lived growing up in Michigan, and while New England is where I choose to live and work, Michigan is still my home. I visit family every year for Christmas and Thanksgiving, for family events and while on vacation. I have been every summer of my life to the sunny and sandy shores of Lake Michigan, staying in the historic village of Elk Rapids (in the greater Traverse City area), to where much of my mother's family retired from life in Detroit and raised families. I have an inextinguishable love for Northern Michigan, for its beauty and history and culture.

Once I received the commission, I started my text search and was, surprisingly, immediately rewarded. While assisting my mother in cleaning out boxes of books that had come from the home of my father's parents years back, I came across a 48-page, 6x4 autographed paperback publication of "Woodland Notes: Nature Poems," a collection of poetry by naturalist and ornithologist, C.H. Blanchard, printed in 1945 in Detroit by the Detroit Audubon Club. The signature inside the book was in blue fountain pen, just under the printed name of C.H. Blanchard and read "'Pop" Blanchard'. Before reading anything past the forward (written by Tom Hadley, President of the Detroit Audubon Club from 1943-1945), I knew instantly that I had stumbled across the source of my texts for this commission.

The poems from Woodland Notes are all well-structured (the majority of them are metered and rhymed), romanticized nature poems, steeped in the eloquent imagery and lush description of a true nature-lover. In the 48 page collection, there are poems about hunting and fishing, about birds and trees, about forests and streams, about the four seasons, and they are all from the perspective of one man who clearly loved and appreciated being connected to these and all aspects of the natural world, a natural world that is able to be accessed at every turn in my amazing home state of Michigan.

But these works are a clearly more than just from the pen of a novice poet or casual naturalist; aside from the quality of the poetry itself, there is evidence in many of the poems of carefully studied and considered observations about birds and nature, with many religious references that clearly connected the beauty and goodness of nature to the beauty and goodness of God.

In creating the musical setting for these poems, I chose to remain true to the sincerity, simplicity and honesty of the poet's voice and intent by using clear harmonies, discernable rhythms and meters. The ensemble of two female voices and two stringed instruments naturally (pardon the pun) provides an intimate presentation for the poetry. I decided to use the second female voice (when the two are present in the texture of the music) as a third instrument, participating in and adding to the accompaniment of the singer whose vocal part declares the text. This somewhat unorthodox treatment of the role of the second singer where present is my "tipping of my hat" to the modernist technique of redefining the role of any instrument in an ensemble.

It was my original intention to create a final song for the ensemble as an actual duet for the soprano and alto to sing together. This intention has not been abandoned but only protractedly postponed.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the musicians of the Michigan Project for their dedication to the creation and presentation of music inspired by the beauty and bounty of Michigan. It is my hope that they and their audiences enjoy the music created to represent that beauty and bounty.

## **A Wren, by Howard Frazin**

The song was commissioned by alto Elizabeth Anker for the Mockingbird Trio in 2004 as part of Liz's 50th birthday celebration concert *Poet Power*. Since its premiere at Pickman Hall in 2004 it has been performed more than a dozen times throughout the country including Longy's SeptemberFest and ALEA III in Boston, the Berkeley City Club Composer's Circle Series in San Francisco, The Atlantic Center for the Arts in Florida, CSU's Summer Arts Festival in Fresno CA, and at The Lyceum by Words&Music in Alexandria VA.

## **Amplification, by Griffin Candey**

*Amplification* takes its name (and concept) from a poem by Michigan composer, Susan Blackwell Ramsey. At the center of the poem stands a metaphor for love as relating to the inner-workings of a lighthouse, specifically by use of Fresnel lenses, which

take a small light (usually a candle or a lantern) and reflects it many times over until it becomes the beacon that lights the way for ships. Ramsey describes love in this way – that it takes a small, everyday thing and amplifies it into something that's "visible twelve miles out to sea."

Writing for unaccompanied voice -- let alone multiple unaccompanied voices -- presents certain challenges in conveying forward movement, tempo, location, interrelation. Rather than attempt to force larger textures on these individual instruments, it occurred to me that I should instead lean in the other direction, to give the vocalists quite a bit of leeway in interpretation, tempo, push-and-pull. Most often, letting performers inhabit the work and make it their own is the quickest way to make a piece take on a life that one could not have otherwise conceived – and that's exactly what has happened with this piece.

### **Living in Light, by Heather Gilligan**

A few years back, Margot Rood asked me to write a set of songs for soprano and cello, with the request that they focus on simplicity. With just two melodic instruments, the challenge was to write four contrasting pieces that remained simple while giving each song its own, distinct personality. To achieve both simplicity and contrast, I gave the cello a different area of focus for each song: in the first song, melodic writing to imitate the voice; then, pizzicato to maintain a lightness of character; next, harmonics to achieve an uneasy, ethereal sound; and last, double stops to reach a sense of stability and peace. The poems, while agonizingly dark at times, also give way to a sense of hope amidst a backdrop of mortal human existence. I tried to capture the emotion behind Teasdale's despair while ultimately favoring a sense of enduring love. The song cycle's title comes from the last line of the fourth song, "Living in light, before they turn back to the nothingness that is their home."

### **Peonies, by Elena Ruehr**

Jim Harrison (1937-2016) was an author who wrote about Michigan's Upper Peninsula in many of his novels. His poetry embraces the natural landscape of the U.P., where I grew up. *Peonies* is not really specific to the U.P. but it was such a lovely poem, I asked Jim for permission to set it, and he said yes!

Musically, the inspiration for *Peonies* came from a performance by Emily Marvosh herself, who sang Bill Bolcom's "Waiting" (another Michigan composer!) at a house concert in Newton, MA right before I wrote *Peonies*. Bolcom's work is stunningly beautiful, gorgeous for the voice, and also extremely simple, recalling popular song from a century ago. *Peonies* also recalls an earlier kind of music, and strives to capture the lilting quality of the meaning of the words in a simple and subtle setting.

### **The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald, arranged by Rick Robinson**

I was really delighted to be invited to compose something for MRP and for the memory of the Edmund Fitzgerald. The story, with Gordon Lightfoot's song and recording, cast quite a shadow in Detroit, where I was born. The 1976 song played constantly on the radio and colored our lives in profound ways. It was the flagship of the Great Lakes fleet of ore-ships. I probably saw it myself a half dozen times right downtown! I suppose we only find our limits when we're tested. Everyone loses sometimes. Every now and then, it's a tragic loss. So I whipped off this dramatic retelling of the original ballade suggesting a symphonic score. Squaring the original 12/8 into 4/4 time sped up the pacing by a third. We begin by riding the bow of the huge vessel as it rises and plummets weirdly in the steep waves. The voices enter, and the ride builds, interrupted by a recurring, reflective echo punctuated by a dramatic silence. The cello adds more detail to the waves, which the viola next speeds up to quick 12/8 time. After the ship is lost, the viola voices the cries of *foul* from the dead souls, while their loved ones wait for bad news. I found another way to turn the narrative toward what positive future there could be for their families.

### **Redford (for Yia-Yia and Pappou) and For the Widows in Paradise, for the fatherless in Ypsilanti, arranged by Mark David Buckles**

I first started listening to the music of Sufjan Stevens while working at the University of Michigan's radio station, WCBN Radio Free Ann Arbor. *Michigan*, released in 2003, was one of Sufjan's earliest albums and it quickly grew a passionate underground following. I played it all the time at the radio station. In many ways I learned more about music by being a DJ than by going to music school.

Sufjan's music is characterized by lush and varied orchestration, odd time signatures that manage to feel normal, and mesmeric and often poignant use of repetition. I loved it.

Sufjan was fascinated by location and local histories, and his lyrics and songs are often built around these frameworks. At the time, he spoke of writing an album for each of the 50 states. He eventually abandoned this project following the success of his masterpiece, *Illinois*.

When I would listen to his music, I would think about the cities and places and people in Michigan. A lot of my experience of the state growing up came through Boy Scouts. We would travel to campgrounds all over the state to experience all the natural beauty of Michigan.

In high school, I attended Interlochen Arts Camp in Northern Michigan, which is where I first met Emily. It was there, surrounded by the pines and the lakes, that I first decided I was going to become a musician.

A few years into college at the University of Michigan (which is where I met Margot), I remember taking a trip with my dad to the upper peninsula to go backpacking through the Porcupine Mountains. Our destination was the appropriately named Paradise, Michigan (the subject of one of these songs). Along the way, we listened together to *Michigan* and talked about all our times together traveling around the state.

When Emily asked me if I could arrange some songs of Sufjan Stevens for the Michigan Recital Project, it felt like the stars had aligned. A huge thank you to her and Margot and all these fabulous musicians. And a hearty bow of gratitude to Michigan for friends, inspiration, and constancy.