



# THE CROSSING

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D O N A L D N A L L Y — C O N D U C T O R

## The Crossing @ Winter

Sunday

January 3

2010

The Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill

**The Crossing @ Winter**  
**Sunday, January 3, 2010, 4pm**  
**Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill**

Program

Legend of the Walled-in Woman (2005) Ēriks Ešenvalds

The Sun Dogs (2008) Ešenvalds

*American Premiere*

I. The Witnesses

II. The Sun Dogs

*Intermission – 15 minutes*

The Little Match Girl Passion (2007) David Lang

1. Come, daughter
2. It was terribly cold
3. Dearest heart
4. In an old apron
5. Penance and remorse
6. Lights were shining
7. Patience, patience!
8. Ah! perhaps
9. Have mercy, my God
10. She lighted another match
11. From the sixth hour
12. She again rubbed a match
13. When it is time for me to go
14. In the dawn of morning
15. We sit and cry

*Please join us in Widener Hall for our post-concert reception.*

## The Crossing

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Veronica Chapman- Smith	K. Rebecca Oehlers	Donald Nally, conductor
Colin Dill	Rob Phillips	John Grecia, accompanist

The Crossing's Month of Moderns was named to The Philadelphia Inquirer's "Best Classical Events of the Year – 2009." The 2010 Month of Moderns begins June 27 with a world premiere by David Lang for choir and string orchestra; it continues July 7 and July 17.

### Notes and Texts

#### Legend of the Walled-in Woman

##### Ēriks Ešēnvalds (b. 1977)

Ēriks Ešēnvalds' art is built on his ear for textures; out of a large fabric of interwoven voices, solo and smaller ensembles emerge as if speaking to us from another time or place. Indeed, Ešēnvalds' music often feels like it is happening now, but has already happened; it evokes a strong sense of memory and nostalgia, yet is compelling because, despite its hovering quality, it moves forward – at times, with urgency. Difficult to describe, it's as if it is moving linearly and horizontally at the same time and feels as if it is covered with a veil, under which is a synthesis of centuries of composers' ideas about harmony and melody, texture, and timbre.

For a commission requiring the use of Balkan folk music, Ešēnvalds found the Albanian folk song on which *Legend of the Walled-in Woman* is based. The haunting quality of this song intrigued him, but he could find no one to tell him what it meant. About to discard it, an old Norwegian, from near the castle attributed to the legend, contacted him with this odd, sad story, which Ešēnvalds complemented with a thoroughly modern elegiac poem of Martin Camaj. (This theme of today and yesterday is not just figurative in his work). The work employs two choirs, with the second emerging suddenly, quietly, out of the distance; the effect is brilliant and stupefying.

*Legend of the Walled-in Woman* was commissioned by Latvian Radio Choir and its conductor Sigvards Klava. It was premiered at the festival *Klangspuren* in Austria 2005 and won the 2006 (under-thirty-year-old) competition of the International Music Council, UNESCO and Radio in Paris.

The story: The ancient Albanian folksong on which this work is based tells the legend of three brothers who began to build a castle to protect themselves from the Roman and Greek invaders. The brothers worked during the daytime, but at night their work was mysteriously destroyed. One night, their mother had a dream: one of the brothers had

to offer his wife as a sacrifice, then the castle would stand firm. None of the brothers wanted to sacrifice his wife, but they agreed not to tell their wives about the dream. Every day, one of the wives would go to the castle with food for the brothers. They decided that the wife who came to the castle with food the next day would be sacrificed in the foundations of the castle. That evening the two older brothers told their wives about the dream, and warned them not to go to the castle the next day. The youngest one told his wife nothing.

It is believed that this folksong dates from the time when the castle of *Shkodër* (in north Albania) was built – some 2700 years ago. (A legend does indeed tell of a woman sacrificed in the foundations of the castle.) The folksong begins with the mother-in-law asking her daughters-in-law to go with food to the castle.

Atje te ura në lumë,  
Ooooi, E mjera unë,  
Most a bëre të bëje punë,  
Ooooi, E mjera unë.

There on the bridge by the river,  
Oh, poor me,  
Do not do any work today,  
Oh, poor me.

Qi fletë vjehrra nusës së madhe,  
Ooooi,  
Bjeru bukën mos të valë,Ooooi,  
E mjera unë.

The mother-in-law said to her elder  
daughter-in-law, Oh,  
Send the food, don't hesitate!  
Oh, poor me.

Qi fletë vjehrra nusës së vogël,  
Ooooi,  
Bjeru bukën mos të valë,  
Ooooi, E mjera unë.

The mother-in-law said to her younger  
daughter-in-law, Oh,  
Send the food, don't hesitate!  
Oh, poor me.

Në themelët e Kalasë,  
Ooooi,  
Është pendu se ja dhanë një vashë,  
Ooooi, E mjera unë

On the basement of the Castle,  
Oh,  
They regret that they give a girl,  
Oh, poor me.

- Translation from Albanian by  
Arbresha Dula.

When I die, may I turn into grass  
On my mountains in spring,  
In autumn I will turn to seed.

When I die, may I turn into water,  
My misty breath  
Will fall onto the meadows as rain.

When I die, may I turn into stone,  
On the confines of my land  
May I be a landmark.

- Martin Camaj, "Vendit tem," from *Lirika midis dy moteve*, Munich 1967, translated from the Albanian by Robert Elsie, 1993.

## The Sun Dogs Ešenvalds

Eriks Ešenvalds' *The Sun Dogs* has a curious origin. Who would think of setting ancient texts about the phenomenon of sun dogs (ice halos that have mystified humans for millennia)? Latvians only very rarely see them (Americans south of Alaska see them seldom). As with *Legend of the Walled-in Woman*, the commissioner – again, the Latvian Radio Choir – suggested the topic, and Ešenvalds soon found himself in awe of the many references to sun dogs spanning centuries; he recounts that he felt the authors – King Edward IV of England, Cicero, Jakob Hutter – seeing the exact same marvel from the viewpoint of very different times were in a way speaking to each other. (An amusing side note: two years earlier, our friend James MacMillan also set a work by the same name loosely based on the same topic which we will sing on July 17; we discovered Ešenvalds' work looking for works to program with MacMillans'!) A textbook demonstration of the composer's command of textures, this work has the intriguing effect of triangles struck very lightly by knitting needles in the 'refrain' (a returning, textless, soaring passage that evokes a kind of expansive, other-worldly tone), creating a vague, dreamlike sound that blurs the present, not unlike the halos the cause sun dogs. The musical language is one of searching and wonder; it seems to float in time – not this time, and not the past, but perhaps a memory of the future.

In the first movement we hear particular accounts of this mystifying phenomenon, given to solo voices or sections of the choir. In the second, these personal accounts are fractured and the rich descriptions handed down through the ages seem to collapse together into a formless, free flowing celebration of nature's gifts.

The Science: Parhelions, or sun dogs, are the result of ice crystal clouds called cirrostratus clouds refracting or reflecting light from the sun. The clouds form a halo around the sun that interacts with sunlight. If light refracts through it, the sun dog shows a spectrum of colors. White sun dogs are caused by reflecting light. Sun dogs mostly appear when the sun is 'close to' the earth, or below a 61 degree angle relative to the horizon. Therefore they can only be seen at sunrise or sunset, excepting in extreme latitudes during the winter, when the sun is always low in the sky.

### I. The witnesses

In the consulship of Tiberius Gracchus and Manius Juventus at Capua the sun was seen by night. At Formice two suns were seen by day. The sky was afire. In Cephallenia a trumpet seemed to sound from the sky. There was a rain of earth. A windstorm demolished houses and laid crops flat in the field. By night an apparent sun shone at Pisaurum.

– Julius Obsequens (fl. 4th c. CE, Rome, after Livy, c. 183 BCE)

My beloved children, I want to tell you that on a Friday, we saw three suns in the sky for a good long time, about an hour. And this I, Jakob, saw with my own eyes. After a while the two suns disappeared, and only the one sun remained. I feel this was no small miracle.

– Jakob Hutter (1533, around Moravia)

Well then, Africanus, since you give me a sort of invitation, and encourage me in my hope regarding yourself, shall we not first inquire, before the others arrive, what the facts are in regard to that second sun that has been reported to the Senate? For those

who claim to have seen two suns are neither few nor untrustworthy, so that we must rather explain the fact than disbelieve it. – Cicero, *On the Republic* (c. 54 BCE, Rome)

Three suns we see over us. Oh, shining full clear! This is a good sign, for these three suns betokeneth the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, and therefore let us have a good heart, and in the name of Almighty God go we against our enemies!”

– Edward IV of England (1461, on the morning of the Battle of the Three Suns – War of the Roses – which would lead to his crowning)

## II. The Sun Dogs

...the sun was low in the arctic north...the skies were filled with white circle and arcs crossing the sky...the skies were filled with white light...green sunset...and showers of jewel-colored ice crystals in the air...the sun, though shining still, had a halo with sun dogs on either side....light shone so brightly...flames of fire in the sky...streamers of unearthly splendor...three stars shining full clear...with a strange and fearsome sight...a burning shield scattering sparks ran across the sky...beauty of this miracle...shaft of light, brilliant and powerful...sun dogs showed a red edge on the side closest to the sun...sun dogs glimmered alongside with the true sun...the sun was crowned with a circle having the colors of rainbow, all the warm rainbow colors...brilliance and vivid coloring in a short while fading to white...in the skies two glimmering sun dogs as a harbinger of a storm to come...

- compilation of texts taken from the above authors and Pliny (Rome, 85 BCE), Jennifer Armstrong (*Shipwreck at the Bottom of the World*, 1998, describing Shackleton's journey of 1912), Patrick O'Brien (*Desolation Island*, 1978), Sharon Kay Penman (*The Sunne: A novel of Richard III*, 1982).

## The Little Match Girl Passion

**David Lang (b. 1957)**

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize in Music, 2008, *The Little Match Girl Passion* was co-commissioned by the Carnegie Hall Corporation and the Perth Theater and Concert Hall. It was premiered by Paul Hillier and Theatre of Voices (in the original version for four voices) in October 2007. The choral version was commissioned by the National Chamber Choir of Ireland, Paul Hillier conductor.

Of this work, David Lang writes: “I wanted to tell a story. A particular story – in fact, the story of *The Little Match Girl*, by the Danish author Hans Christian Andersen. The original is ostensibly for children, and it has that shocking combination of danger and morality that many famous children's stories do. A poor young girl, whose father beats her, tries unsuccessfully to sell matches on the street, is ignored, and freezes to death. Through it all she somehow retains her Christian purity of spirit, but it is not a pretty story.

What drew me to *The Little Match Girl* is that the strength of the story lies not in its plot but in the fact that all its parts—the horror and the beauty—are constantly suffused with their opposites. The girl's bitter present is locked together with the sweetness of her past memories; her poverty is always suffused with her hopefulness. There is a kind of naive equilibrium between suffering and hope.

There are many ways to tell this story. One could convincingly tell it as a story about faith or as an allegory about poverty. What has always interested me, however, is that Andersen tells this story as a kind of parable, drawing a religious and moral equivalency between the suffering of the poor girl and the suffering of Jesus. The girl suffers, is scorned by the crowd, dies, and is transfigured. I started wondering what secrets could be unlocked from this story if one took its Christian nature to its conclusion and unfolded it, as Christian composers have traditionally done in musical settings of the Passion of Jesus.

The most interesting thing about how the Passion story is told is that it can include texts other than the story itself. These texts are the reactions of the crowd, penitential thoughts, statements of general sorrow, shock, or remorse. These are devotional guideposts, the markers for our own responses to the story, and they have the effect of making the audience more than spectators to the sorrowful events onstage. These responses can have a huge range—in Bach's *Saint Matthew Passion*, these extra texts range from famous chorales that his congregation was expected to sing along with to completely invented characters, such as the "Daughter of Zion" and the "Chorus of Believers." The Passion format—the telling of a story while simultaneously commenting upon it—has the effect of placing us in the middle of the action, and it gives the narrative a powerful inevitability.

My piece is called *The Little Match Girl Passion* and it sets Hans Christian Andersen's story *The Little Match Girl* in the format of Bach's *Saint Matthew Passion*, interspersing Andersen's narrative with my versions of the crowd and character responses from Bach's Passion. The text is by me, after texts by Hans Christian Andersen, H. P. Paull (the first translator of the story into English, in 1872), Picander (the *nom de plume* of Christian Friedrich Henrici, the librettist of Bach's *Saint Matthew Passion*), and the Gospel according to Saint Matthew. The word "passion" comes from the Latin word for suffering. There is no Bach in my piece and there is no Jesus—rather the suffering of the Little Match Girl has been substituted for Jesus', elevating (I hope) her sorrow to a higher plane." - David Lang

**1. Come, daughter** (paraphrasing Bach's No. 1: Opening Chorus, *Kommt ihr Töchter*)

Come, daughter  
Help me, daughter  
Help me cry  
Look, daughter  
Where, daughter  
What, daughter  
Who, daughter  
Why, daughter  
Guiltless daughter  
Patient daughter  
Gone

**2. It was terribly cold**

It was terribly cold and nearly dark on the last evening of the old year, and the snow was falling fast. In the cold and the darkness, a poor little girl, with bare head and naked feet,

roamed through the streets. It is true she had on a pair of slippers when she left home, but they were not of much use. They were very large, so large, indeed, that they had belonged to her mother, and the poor little creature had lost them in running across the street to avoid two carriages that were rolling along at a terrible rate. One of the slippers she could not find, and a boy seized upon the other and ran away with it, saying that he could use it as a cradle, when he had children of his own. So the little girl went on with her little naked feet, which were quite red and blue with the cold.

So the little girl went on.

So the little girl went on.

### **3. Dearest heart** (paraphrasing Bach's No. 3: Chorale, *Herzliebster Jesu*)

Dearest heart

Dearest heart

What did you do that was so wrong?

What was so wrong?

Dearest heart

Dearest heart

Why is your sentence so hard?

### **4. In an old apron**

In an old apron she carried a number of matches, and had a bundle of them in her hands. No one had bought anything of her the whole day, nor had any one given her even a penny. Shivering with cold and hunger, she crept along; poor little child, she looked the picture of misery. The snowflakes fell on her long, fair hair, which hung in curls on her shoulders, but she regarded them not.

### **5. Penance and remorse** (paraphrasing Bach's No. 6: Alto Aria, *Buss' und Reu'*)

Penance and remorse

Tear my sinful heart in two

My teardrops

May they fall like rain down upon your poor face

May they fall down like rain

My teardrops

Here, daughter, here I am

I should be bound as you were bound

All that I deserve is

What you have endured

Penance and remorse.

Tear my sinful heart in two

My penance

My remorse

My penance

### **6. Lights were shining**

Lights were shining from every window, and there was a savory smell of roast goose, for it was New-year's eve- yes, she remembered that. In a corner, between two houses, one of which projected beyond the other, she sank down and huddled herself together. She had drawn her little feet under her, but she could not keep off the cold; and she dared

not go home, for she had sold no matches, and could not take home even a penny of money. Her father would certainly beat her; besides, it was almost as cold at home as here, for they had only the roof to cover them, through which the wind howled, although the largest holes had been stopped up with straw and rags.

Her little hands were almost frozen with the cold.

Her little hands were almost frozen with the cold.

### **7. Patience, patience!**

Patience.

Patience!

### **8. Ah! perhaps**

Ah! perhaps a burning match might be some good, if she could draw it from the bundle and strike it against the wall, just to warm her fingers. She drew one out—"scratch!" how it sputtered as it burnt! It gave a warm, bright light, like a little candle, as she held her hand over it. It was really a wonderful light. It seemed to the little girl that she was sitting by a large iron stove, with polished brass feet and a brass ornament. How the fire burned! and seemed so beautifully warm that the child stretched out her feet as if to warm them, when, lo! the flame of the match went out, the stove vanished, and she had only the remains of the half-burnt match in her hand.

She rubbed another match on the wall. It burst into a flame, and where its light fell upon the wall it became as transparent as a veil, and she could see into the room. The table was covered with a snowy white table-cloth, on which stood a splendid dinner service, and a steaming roast goose, stuffed with apples and dried plums. And what was still more wonderful, the goose jumped down from the dish and waddled across the floor, with a knife and fork in its breast, to the little girl. Then the match went out, and there remained nothing but the thick, damp, cold wall before her.

### **9. Have mercy, my God** (paraphrasing Bach's No. 39: Alto Aria, *Erbarme dich*)

Have mercy, my God.

Look here, my God.

See my tears fall. See my tears fall.

Have mercy, my God. Have mercy.

My eyes are crying.

My heart is crying, my God.

See my tears fall.

See my tears fall, my God.

### **10. She lighted another match**

She lighted another match, and then she found herself sitting under a beautiful Christmas-tree. It was larger and more beautifully decorated than the one which she had seen through the glass door at the rich merchants. Thousands of tapers were burning upon the green branches, and colored pictures, like those she had seen in the show-windows, looked down upon it all. The little one stretched out her hand towards them, and the match went out. The Christmas lights rose higher and higher, till they looked to her like the stars in the sky. Then she saw a star fall, leaving behind it a bright streak of fire.

"Some one is dying," thought the little girl, for her old grandmother, the only one who had ever loved her, and who was now dead, had told her that when a star falls, a soul was going up to God.

**11. From the sixth hour** (Matthew 27:45)

From the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour she cried out:

Eli, Eli.

**12. She again rubbed a match**

She again rubbed a match on the wall, and the light shone round her; in the brightness stood her old grandmother, clear and shining, yet mild and loving in her appearance. "Grandmother," cried the little one, "O take me with you; I know you will go away when the match burns out; you will vanish like the warm stove, the roast goose, and the large, glorious Christmas-tree." And she made haste to light the whole bundle of matches, for she wished to keep her grandmother there. And the matches glowed with a light that was brighter than the noon-day, and her grandmother had never appeared so large or so beautiful. She took the little girl in her arms, and they both flew upwards in brightness and joy far above the earth, where there was neither cold nor hunger nor pain, for they were with God.

**13. When it is time for me to go**

(paraphrasing Bach's No. 62: Chorale, *Wenn ich einmal soll scheiden*)

When it is time for me to go

Don't go from me

When it is time for me to leave

Don't leave me

When it is time for me to die

Stay with me -

When I am most scared

Stay with me

**14. In the dawn of morning**

In the dawn of morning there lay the poor little one, with pale cheeks and smiling mouth, leaning against the wall; she had been frozen to death on the last evening of the year; and the New-year's sun rose and shone upon a little corpse! The child still sat, in the stiffness of death, holding the matches in her hand, one bundle of which was burnt. "She tried to warm herself," said some. No one imagined what beautiful things she had seen, nor into what glory she had entered with her grandmother, on New-year's day.

**15. We sit and cry** (paraphrasing Bach's No. 68: Closing Chorus, *Wir setzen*)

We sit and cry

And call to you

Rest soft, daughter, rest soft

Where is your grave, daughter?

Where is your tomb?

Where is your resting place?

Rest soft, daughter, rest soft

Rest soft

Rest soft

Rest soft

Rest soft

You closed your eyes.

I closed my eyes.

Rest soft

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## **The Month of Moderns**

In Concert at the Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill

**Month of Moderns I:** works for choir and strings  
with the Philadelphia Virtuosi; Daniel Spalding, Director  
Sunday June 27, 4pm

**Month of Moderns II:** works for choir and organ  
featuring our resident organist, Scott Dettra  
Friday July 9, 8pm

**Month of Moderns III:** works for unaccompanied choir  
Saturday July 17, 8pm

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