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THE CROSSING

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

Presents

## The Month of Moderns II

Join us in presenting more concerts like this by writing a check, placing it in the envelope provided, and mailing it to us – or, give it to an usher this evening. Alternatively, you may donate online at [www.crossingchoir.com](http://www.crossingchoir.com).

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THE MONTH OF MODERNS continues at PCCH...

Friday June 5, 8pm – works of Arvo Pärt, John McCabe, Bo Holten, Paul Fowler, and a world premiere by Kile Smith – Bo Holten will join us for this concert!

The Crossing will sing the opening concert of Chorus America's National Conference: Wednesday 10 June 2009 at 7.30 at St. Peter's Church, 3rd and Pine Streets. Join us for this free concert, which we will share with The Princeton Singers.

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

Friday, May 22nd - 8PM

Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill  
8855 Germantown Avenue  
Philadelphia, PA 19118

## Program

In nomine (1999)	Bo Holten
Dreaming England: This Scepter'd Isle (2005)	Peter McGarr
Statements (1970)	Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen

Epic text:	i. morning a face a coast
	ii. jump a morning a face
	iii. haze a jump a morning
	iv. eye a haze a jump
	v. coast an eye a haze
	vi. face a coast an eye
Statements:	i. it is and it is enough
	ii. I make statements and that is all

Évocation II, for organ solo (1996)	Thierry Escaich
A New Song (1998)	James MacMillan

## Intermission

<i>Bilder der Hoffnung</i> (Pictures of Hope, 1998)	Petr Eben
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Prelude  
Creation  
Promise  
Interlude I  
Loyalty  
Interlude II  
Water  
Night  
Postlude

Examples (1972)	Gudmundsen-Holmgreen
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- i. not just she herself
- ii. morning
- iii. children recognize superiority
- iv. red-cheeked child
- v. old man meditating
- vi. on the tree is a leaf

Breathturn	Kirsten Broberg
world premiere: written for The Crossing's Celan Project the work is performed as a single movement	

Into the furrows  
(I know you,  
You were  
Paths in the shadow-break  
Threadsun

Whispers (2002)	Steven Stucky, after William Byrd
-----------------	-----------------------------------

I see, just see, skyward, great cloud-masses;  
Mournfully, slowly they roll, silently  
welling and mixing;  
With, at times, a half-dimm'd,  
sadden'd, far-off star,  
Appearing and disappearing.  
–Walt Whitman (1819-1892, excerpted by the composer)

*Ave verum corpus natum  
de Maria Virgine,  
vere passum, immolatum  
in cruce pro homine,  
cuius latus perforatum  
unda fluxit et sanguine,  
esto nobis praegustatum  
in mortis examine.*

Hail, true Body,  
Born of the Virgin Mary,  
Truly suffered, immolated  
On the Cross for man,  
Whose pierced side  
Flowed with water and blood,  
Let it be for us a foretaste [of heaven]  
In the trial of death.  
- 14th-c. Eucharistic hymn

## Special Thanks

We thank the Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill – Reverend Cindy Jarvis and Music Director Mark Anderson – for its continuing generosity.

Special thanks to these generous contributors providing essential support:  
Tour Resource Consultants, Maury Schulte, owner: [www.tourresource.com](http://www.tourresource.com)  
Beryl B. Byles  
The Alpin J. and Alpin W. Cameron Memorial Fund  
The Aaron Copland Fund for Music  
Max Holmes  
Jonathan Sprogell and M. Kathryn Taylor  
Beth Van de Water

The Crossing is a member of Chorus America, through a gift of Larry Passmore.

The Crossing is grateful to be selected by the Philadelphia Music Project at The Pew Center for Arts and Research for participation in Arts Action Research consultations with Nello McDaniel.

Our thanks to Jeff Dinsmore, Rodrigo Mattos, and all our friends at [www.BeSeenCommunications.com](http://www.BeSeenCommunications.com) who continue to generously make gifts of their marketing and graphic talents.

Special thanks for Maren Montalbano Brehm for scheduling/personnel/finances; Rob Phillips for stage management/logistics; Jodi Bohr for accompaniment assistance; Mark Anderson and Beryl Byles for housing; Shari Alise Wilson and our friend Beth Van de Water for our post-concert receptions.

(I KNOW YOU, you are the deeply bowed,  
I, the transpierced, am subject to you.  
Where flames a word, would testify for us both?  
You—all, all real. I—all delusion.)

YOU WERE my death:  
you I could hold,  
when all fell from me.

PATHS IN THE SHADOW-BREAK  
of your hand.  
From the four-finger-furrow  
I root up the  
petrified blessing.

THREADSUNS  
above the grayblack wastes.  
A tree-  
high thought  
grasps the light-tone: there are  
still songs to sing beyond  
mankind.

– Paul Celan (trans. Pierre Joris)

Original sources: Into the furrows (In die Rillen), (I know you (Ich kenne dich), Paths in the shadow-break (Wege im Schatten-gebrach), Threadsuns (Fadensonnen) are found in *Breathturn* by Paul Celan, translated by Pierre Joris, Sun & Moon Press, Los Angeles, 1995; *You were (Du warst)*, is found in *Threadsuns* by Paul Celan, translated by Pierre Joris, Sun & Moon Press, 2000.

**Whispers** Steven Stucky (b. 1949, Kansas) (after William Byrd, c.1540-1623)

**Written for:** Chanticleer, as a companion piece to Stucky's *Drop, drop slow tears*, also based on an late 16th-century motet (of Orlando Gibbons).

**We found it:** like Holten's *In nomine*, looking for works that take a modern look at Elizabethan England

**Of this work:** the composer writes, "*Whispers* recalls fragments of William Byrd's famous motet *Ave verum corpus*, surrounding those fragments with my own setting of lines from Walt Whitman's *Whispers of Heavenly Death* (1868). In both the Whitman and the Byrd, thoughts and images of death are so transmuted by the power of great art that the result is not sadness, but instead a kind of mystical exaltation. This is a blessing that we need more than ever in our own time..."

Whispers of heavenly death,  
murmur'd I hear;  
Labial gossip of night—sibilant chorals;  
Footsteps gently ascending—mystical  
breezes, wafted soft and low;  
Ripples of unseen rivers—tides of  
a current, flowing, forever flowing;

## The Crossing

Karen Blanchard  
Steven Bradshaw  
Maren Montalbano Brehm  
Jeffrey Chapman  
Veronica Chapman-Smith  
Colin Dill  
Jeffrey Dinsmore  
Ryan Fleming  
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Dan Spratlan  
Karen Wapner  
Rebecca Whitlow

Steve Williamson\*  
Shari Alise Wilson  
Steven Ziegler  
Michele Zuckman\*

\*joining us for Bo Holten's  
*In Nomine*

Donald Nally, conductor  
Scott Dettra, organ

John Grecia, accompanist

## Notes and translations

### In nomine

Bo Holten (b. 1948, Denmark)

**Written for:** The BBC Singers to mark their seventy-fifth anniversary, and premiered with the composer conducting at Norwich Cathedral, 1999.

**We found it:** Looking for works that connect us musically to the past; it is the first of three works on tonight's program that look back to the English Renaissance.

**Of this piece: Holten writes:** "The work follows the more than 400 years old English tradition of writing *In nomines*. The ancient plainsong tune is ever-present in the score. At the same time my *In nomine* harks back to the even older continental tradition of writing many-voiced canons, e.g. Ockeghem's *Deo Gratias* (36 voices) and Josquin's *Qui habitat* (24 voices). My *In nomine* tune unfolds in up to a 20-voice canon in three keys at the same time. From afar are heard echoes of John Taverner's original *In nomine* setting (c. 1538), as a reminder of what started the whole thing off." Thus, a rather simple technique produces music sounding quite complex through rhythmic displacement; the effect is one of timelessness, with the ancient music of Taverner recalling a kind of grounding that seems lost to us today.

In nomine Domini, Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth.  
In the name of the Lord, Holy Lord God of Hosts.  
- Sanctus to the Mass

### Dreaming England: This Sceptr'd Isle

Peter McGarr (b. 1953, England)

**Written for:** Exmoor Singers of London, an ensemble dedicated to new works and commissioning

**We found it:** dreaming of (olde) England.

**In this work:** McGarr demonstrates a similar interest in nostalgia, but draws not on a musical theme of Elizabethan England, but rather words of its most important writer. At the end of the sixteenth century, Elizabeth's England was at the height of its nationalism, with a "national church" providing a sense of self and the defeat of the Spanish Armada a sense of pride and security. But it was decaying politically and financially, and Elizabeth's habit of avoiding military alliances and political decisions left the little island isolated physically, politically and philosophically. Thus, in *Richard II* (c. 1595) – a play rich in political warning – Shakespeare pens a speech for the King's confidante, John of Gaunt, that could easily have come from Elizabeth's lips, full of love and irony, awe and defeat. McGarr uses

a technique in which he alternates between unisons and many voices fanned out to great ranges to create a kind of kaleidoscope of sound, mirroring England's kaleidoscopic history – its rises and falls. Indeed, McGarr includes the singers in the depth of his sentiment; at the climactic full unison forte “this blessed plot, this earth, this realm” he prints in the score (in nearly microscopic font) a poem of Philip Larkin: “and that will be England gone./The shadows, the meadows, the lanes,/the guildhalls, the carved choirs./There'll be books, it will linger on/In galleries, but all that remains/For us will be concrete and tires.” The bitter climax is followed by a coda that is almost unbearably beautiful, lost in memory.

This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle,  
 This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,  
 This other Eden, demi-paradise;  
 This fortress built by Nature for herself  
 Against infection and the hand of war;  
 This happy breed of men this little world;  
 This precious stone set in the silver sea,  
 Which serves it in the office of a wall,  
 Or as a moat defensive to a house,  
 Against the envy of less happier lands, -  
 This blessed plot, this earth, this realm,  
 this England.

– William Shakespeare (1564-1616)  
 King Richard II; II, i

### Statements

Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen (b. 1932, Denmark)

**We found him:** through our friend David Lang, who suggested we listen to his amazing work “*je ne me tairai, jamais, jamais,*” in which a clown's car horn is used in the most extraordinarily moving way.

**In this work:** we hear a certain unique minimalism that entered our musical language in the late sixties in an attempt to remove complexity from music and create an emotional world from a very few compositional elements (in this case, a few words, connected by an article or conjunction, and six notes which only occasionally align to create a chord). Of his life and work, Gudmundsen-Holmgreen says: “I take after my father [a sculptor], nothing odd about that. Apart from the interest in space and texture, I have inherited his sensitivity and kept his childish and naïve outlook to my work. In my opinion this is one of the cardinal virtues. Even if life can weigh heavily, where experience peels the spontaneity away, for most people there is a little reservoir of innocence at the bottom of their soul. I believe that I, through my music, have managed to retain a certain childish delight. And I have also inherited from my father the quest for the perfect form. I know that it can't be found, but I shall continue to try. I think that there is in each work a meaning, a dream, that the layers can be peeled away to reveal.” (see note under *Examples* for more of his thoughts)

- |             |       |                                   |
|-------------|-------|-----------------------------------|
| Epic text:  | i.    | morning a face a coast            |
|             | ii.   | jump a morning a face             |
|             | vii.  | haze a jump a morning             |
|             | viii. | eye a haze a jump                 |
|             | ix.   | coast an eye a haze               |
|             | x.    | face a coast an eye               |
| Statements: | i.    | it is and it is enough            |
|             | ii.   | I make statements and that is all |

then I think instead about the darkness  
 instead of the man  
 I think of the wind  
 and empty place in the woods  
 then I think about myself.  
 – Henrik Nordbrandt

on the tree is a leaf  
 on the tree is a leaf  
 – Strandgaard

### Breathturn

Kirsten Broberg (b. 1979, Minnesota)

**Written for:** this performance, as part of The Celan Project, which we began with David Shapiro's “It is time,” premiered in January, and will conclude with Kile Smith's “Where flames a word” on June 5.

**We found her:** searching for composers in Chicago; Kirsten's fresh ideas about color and rhythm and how they interact in music intrigued us and inspired us to ask her to write her first choral work for The Crossing. Kirsten is American Music Center's featured composer this month on the New Music Box and Counterstream Radio's spotlight sessions; she is currently composing a work for Kronos string quartet.

**In this work:** we hear Kirsten's interest (and discipline!) in concentrating a great amount of information and energy into very small spaces; the five movements are indistinguishable – even to the singers – and transition without notice, tying their related worlds together, as the overall progression of emotional content gradually slows to an elongated series of captivating harmonies. The listener may not be aware of just how compact this emotional world is; the entire work is based around a single note – F – and very few of its harmonies do not include this pitch. The sound world she creates from this compact vocabulary demonstrates again for our audience how one need not know the specific references in Celan's poetry to feel the impact of his extraordinary imagery. Kirsten seems to accept this from the start, creating a musical world inspired by feelings and sounds (and not a programmatic depiction of the words). In fact; the feelings are evoked by the sounds, demonstrated, for example, by the impact of her graphic setting of words like “flames” (the effect of striking matches) and “transpierced” (a similarly striking, percussive moment). Her music leads us through these images with fury, love, and ecstasy.

Five continuous movements:

- i. Into the Furrows
- ii. (I know you
- iii. You were
- iv. Paths in the shadow-break
- v. Threadsuns

### INTO THE FURROWS

of heaven acid in the doorcrack  
 you press the word  
 from which I rolled,  
 when I with trembling fists  
 the roof over us  
 dismantled, slate for slate,  
 syllable for syllable, for the copper-  
 glimmer of the begging-  
 cup's sake up  
 there.

she tries to see the light  
through one of her hairs  
it is turning grey  
she thinks about herself  
a nobody sitting nowhere  
it's lovely  
– Charlotte Strandgaard

children recognize superiority  
children recognize superiority  
children encounter tolerance  
children are smaller  
– Strandgaard

red-cheeked child  
child red-cheeked  
mother strong  
child helpless  
mother solicitous  
child downy  
mother happy  
child innocent  
mother loving  
child small  
mother young  
child frail  
mother gentle  
child clean  
mother tender  
child fragrant  
mother good  
– Strandgaard

old man meditating  
I think of a man in a wood  
of an old man with a lantern  
all alone in a great forest  
than I think of what he is staring at  
and at what occupies him  
so much that he won't even blink  
when an insect hits him in the eye  
in the circle of light from the lantern  
one sees what he is staring at  
that which no one other than he can see  
then instead I think of his shadow  
the shadow of an old man  
among all the tree trunks  
the shadow blows through his beard  
and through his vast and wide arm-hole  
the shadow of his shape always in the wind  
that now is heard everywhere  
increasing until the light  
is blown out

## Évocation II, for organ solo

Thierry Escaich (b. 1965, France)

Thierry Escaich is organist at Paris' St. Etienne-de-Mont, the long-time home to Maurice Duruflé in whose footsteps Escaich continues as master organist and celebrated composer. His Evocation II sets C major and minor against each other in energetic play that dramatically climaxes mid-work to allow for the major to dominate in a joyful conclusion.

## A New Song

James MacMillan (b. 1959, Scotland)

**Written for:** the choir at St. Bride's Episcopal Church, Glasgow

**We found it:** because the composer is all around us, all the time

**In this piece:** we happily celebrate two birthdays: our friend James MacMillan turns fifty on July 16, the same day as our own alto Susan Polack! We rejoice with this simple, elegant motet in which a chant-like refrain over a drone bass alternates with joyfully polyphonic verses in which all voices are in imitation. Within the verses the lines rise and fall, each with the now well-known "MacMillan-esque" Gaelic vocal ornament at its apex.

O sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord, all the earth.  
Sing unto the Lord and praise His Name; be telling of His salvation from day to day.  
For He cometh to judge the earth, and with righteousness to judge the world and the people with his truth.  
– Psalm 96: 1, 2, 13

## Intermission - 15 Minutes

### *Bilder der Hoffnung (Pictures of Hope)*

Petr Eben (1929-2007, Czech Republic)

Charles Péguy's book, *The Mystery of the Portal of Hope*, is a prose poem of simplicity and profundity, written for a church that was perhaps not ready to accept such base, honest language. In it, a Franciscan nun teaches Joan of Arc (who was, like Péguy, of Orleans) her catechism, speaking to her from behind a cathedral door. But her words are the words of God and they are not magnificent nor majestic; instead, they are those of a peasant who conversationally marvels at his own creation, often repeats himself in his wonder at the things he has made, and finds himself astonished at that which he has not: hope – sprung from within the people he created – which he personifies as "this little girl, hope."

The faith that I love best, says God, is hope.  
Faith doesn't surprise me.  
It's not surprising  
I am so resplendent in my creation. . . .  
That in order really not to see me these poor people would have to be blind.  
Charity says God, that doesn't surprise me.  
It's not surprising.  
These poor creatures are so miserable that unless they had a heart of stone, how could they not have love for one another.  
How could they not love their brothers.  
How could they not take the bread from their own mouth, their daily bread, in order to give it to the unhappy children who pass by.  
And my son had such love for them. . . .  
But hope, says God, that is something that surprises me.  
Even me.  
That is surprising.

That these poor children see how things are going and believe that tomorrow things will go better.

That they see how things are going today and believe that they will go better tomorrow morning.

That is surprising and it's by far the greatest marvel of our grace.

And I'm surprised by it myself.

And my grace must indeed be an incredible force.

Christine Blume has fashioned five short poems that sift Péguy's words down to their essence: Eben titled each of the choral movements for one of God's creations, and the music follows the path from description to wonder, as each little poem leads from that creation to the re-discovery of hope.

## Prelude

### Creation

*Leuchtende Erde und schimmernde Meere,  
Glanz des Ursprungs, im Glauben erschaut.  
Leben der Tiere, dem Schöpfer zur Ehre,  
Mensch der Liebe, mit Sorge vertraut.  
Aber die Hoffnung liebt,  
Was erst die Zukunft gibt.*

Gleaming earth and shimmering seas,  
splendor of the source, in faith beheld.  
Life of beasts, to honor the Creator,  
mankind of love, with care bestowed.  
But hope loves,  
what only the future offers.

### Promise

*Bürgin des Tages, dem Morgen gegeben,  
Wort, das Morgen dem Abend verheißt,  
Leben der Kindheit und Kindheit dem Leben,  
Geist dem Fleisch und Fleisch für den Geist.  
Hoffnung der Ewigkeit,  
Ankunft in dieser Zeit.*

Witness of the day, given the morning,  
word, that morning promises the eventide,  
life of childhood, and childhood to life,  
spirit to the flesh and flesh for the spirit.  
Hope of eternity,  
arrival in our time.

## Interlude I

### Loyalty

*Dichte der Welten, im Dunkel der Zeiten,  
Flamme, klein und zitternd im Wind,  
bangend im Anhauch unendlicher Weiten,  
unbeirrbar und treu wie ein Kind.  
Hoffnung, die keinen verlässt,  
hält diese Flamme fest.*

Closeness of worlds, in darkness of times,

flame, small and trembling in the wind,  
fearful of breathing into endless space,  
imperturbed and faithful as a child.  
Hope, which none abandons,  
holds fast this flame.

## Interlude II

### Water

*Wasser der Erde, im Boden versinken,  
schwer und trüb, Regen, Sümpfe und Flut.  
Brunnen der Tiefe zu schöpfen und trinken,  
frisch und klar, was gereinigt und gut.  
Hoffnung, verwandelnder Quell,  
unerschöpflich und hell.*

Waters of earth, into the ground sink,  
heavy and muddy, rain, swamps and flood.  
Deep fountains to draw and to drink,  
fresh and clear, that is purified and good.  
Hope, the transforming spring,  
inexhaustible and bright.

### Night

*Neige der Tage, im nächtlichen Reigen  
Töchter Gottes im Sternengewand.  
Ufer der Ruhe, Stunden im Schweigen,  
Frieden füllt das versunkene Land.  
Hoffnung, die heilt und befreit,  
Anfang und Ende der Zeit.*

End of days, in nightly rounds of dance,  
daughters of God in firmament's robes.  
Shore of rest, hours in silence,  
peace fills the transfigured land.  
Hope, healing and liberating,  
beginning and end of time.

### Postlude

Christine Blume, based on Charles Péguy  
(1873 Orleans – 1914 Battle of Marne)

– translations by Ute Holmes

## Examples

**In this work:** we hear a Beckett-like pessimism about our lives that is somehow tinged with a taut, intense beauty. The composer writes: "I see the human being as relatively helpless, a victim of forces it can't understand. I am a little depressed on behalf of humanity. I am not a member of the Hallelujah chorus, and I get on better with people who observe than with those people who wish to give answers and solutions. I became fascinated with Beckett the first time I saw *Endgame*...His consequent pessimism means that he experiences things from other sides. Beckett concentrates on meaninglessness, which in itself has a remarkable power since it liberates new possibilities in one's experience of the world. In removing all the well-meant speech that one is surrounded with, by knocking it over point by point - whether it be divine love, mother love, love of children, love of love, all the things that we are force-fed with, until at last we don't know ourselves what we mean - then one comes to a catastrophic condition that has something deeply liberating about it. This is also why I like Cage so much...But the philosophies of these two do not involve complete renunciation as they continue to write, they just wish to associate with meaninglessness to try to get to grips with it, which is, of course, impossible. But it is the attempt that counts, for in the attempt humanity shows through. Cage said something that Beckett could have said: "I have nothing to say, and I am saying it."

Note: the texts below vary slightly from those sung, as these are the poets' translations, while those sung are modified to fit the music composed for the Danish original.

not only she herself  
not only she herself but also the way she smiles and  
not only the way she smiles but also the way  
she is attentive and not only the way she is  
attentive but also her hand and not only  
her hand but also her hand in his hand and not  
only her hand in his hand but also his hand in  
her hand and not only his hand in her hand but  
also his hand alone and not only his hand alone but  
also the way he is attentive and not only the  
way he is attentive but also the way he  
smiles and not only the way he smiles but  
also he himself

– Hans-Jørgen Nielsen

morning  
she is glad  
she is alone  
she strokes the bedclothes  
it is seldom  
she gets up late  
she enjoys it  
the air is transparent and grey  
she has ordered fresh bread in advance  
also pastries  
she takes it all on a tray  
she brings it into bed  
she doesn't feel like reading the newspapers  
it begins to blow outside  
the cigarette smoke hangs in the air