

DARRELL J. JORDAN & SAMUEL LIBRA

Cathedral Cantorei
baritone

Associate Cathedral Organist
piano

Biblické Písně (“Biblical Songs”), op. 99

Antonín Dvořák

Darkness and thunderclouds

1841–1904

Lord, my shield, my refuge and hope art Thou

Hear my prayer, Lord my God

My shepherd is the Lord

Songs of gladness will I sing Thee

Hear, oh Lord, my bitter cry

By the shore of the river Babylon

Oh Lord, have mercy and turn Thou Thy face to me

My eyes will I to the hills lift up

Oh sing unto the Lord a joyful song

Although most classical music fans wouldn't likely know it, Antonín Dvořák spent a brief period of his life in the United States. A patriotic Bohemian with an interest in Czech folk music, he was invited in 1892 to serve as director of the newly-founded National Conservatory in New York City. There, he shared his passion for national musics, encouraging composers to work with African-American gospel and spirituals as a fertile source of inspiration. He encouraged young composers such as Florence Price and Harry Burleigh to record and perform the music of black America. These friendships helped inspire perhaps his most famous work, the *Symphony from the New World*, which included a spiritual of Dvořák's invention, later set to the text "Goin' Home."

While in New York, Dvořák learned of the death of his friend, the German pianist and conductor, Hans von Bülow. He received a further blow when he discovered that his father, back in Bohemia, was dying. Amid this heart-rending news, he turned to the Psalms in the Kralice Bible—the very first translation of the Scriptures into Czech. Pensive and filled with pathos, these simple settings became some of Dvořák's most beloved songs for their prayerful earnestness.

All his life, Dvořák was a religious man and had spent a good many years in service to the Catholic Church. As a younger man, he had pursued a career as an organist, including serving at the parish of St. Adalbert in Prague. While in the United States, longing for his native land, he found welcome respite in the small Czech community of Spillville—a miniscule town in the fields of Northeastern Iowa. While there, he lived a spartan life, composing alone in his two-room apartment and playing for daily Mass at the local parish of St. Wenceslaus, which still houses the modest organ Dvořák had played each day.

Spillville is roughly ten miles from Decorah, Iowa, where I did my undergraduate studies. It is even closer to Ossian, Iowa, where my mother's family has lived for generations. I would like to dedicate this performance to them and to the memory of my paternal great-grandfather (a Czech immigrant). I learned of these songs as a student at Luther and have always felt that they brought me very close to both my "motherland" and "fatherland."

—Samuel Libra

Texts and Translations

1. *Oblak a mrákota jest vůkol něho*

*Oblak a mrákota jest vůkol něho,
Spravedlnost a soud základ trůnu jeho.
Óheň předchází jej a zapaluje
vůkol nepřátele jeho.
Zasvěcujít' se po okršku světa blýskání jeho;
To vidouc země děsí se.
Hory jako vosk rozplývají
se před obličejem Hospodina,
Panovníka vši země.
A slávu jeho spatřují všichni národové.*

Darkness and thunderclouds

Darkness and thunderclouds are round about him
Judgment is His abode, righteousness his throne.
Fire and flame He doth send, his enemies destroyeth
in lightning and thunder. And through the world
his stormy lightning flashed, earth saw and trembled.
Tremblingly waited on His word.
Mountains melt like wax when they beheld the Lord
who is God of earth and heaven,
when the Mighty One cometh.
The heavens declare His righteousness and the earth His glory.

2. *Skrýše má a pavezá má Ty jsi*

*Skrýše má a pavezá má Ty jsi,
Na slovo vzaté očekávám.
Odstuptež ode mne, nešlechtníci,
Abych ostříhal přikázání Boha svého.
Posiluj mne, bych zachován byl,
A patřil ku stanoveným Tvým ustavičně.
Děsí se strachem před Tebou tělo mé,
Nebo soudů Tvých bojím se náramně.*

Lord, my shield, my refuge and hope art Thou

Lord, my shield, my refuge and hope art Thou.
And in Thy word put I my trust.
Avaunt from me ye who evil do practice.
Thy Word is law and I will love the Lord my Savior.
Lord, give me strength, keep me from evil,
May my delight be all in Thy commandments ever.
In fear and trembling I stand here in Thy sight,
For I fear Thy judgment; Lord, I fear exceedingly.

3. *Slyš o Bože! slyš modlitbu mou*

*Slyš o Bože! slyš modlitbu mou,
Neskrývej se před prosbou mou.
Pozoruj a vyslyš mne;
Neboť nařikám v úpění svém,
A kormoutím se.
Srdce mé tesklí ve mně,
A strachové smrti přišli na mne,
A hrůza přikvačila mne.
I řekl jsem: Ó bych měl křídla
jako holubice,
Zaletěl bych a poodpočinul.*

Hear my prayer, Lord my God

Hear my prayer, Lord my God,
And hide not Thyself from my entreaty.
Hear my prayer, oh hear my prayer;
To the voice of my mourning give ear,
Oh Lord, hear my prayer.
Pained and sore is my heart,
The fear of death lies heavy upon me,
And terror hath encompassed me.
And thus I spake: Oh, had I wings
like a silver dove,
I would fly far away and be at rest.

*Aj, daleko bych se vzdálil,
A přebýval bych na poušti.
Pospíšil bych ujíti větru
Prudkému a vichřici.*

Ah, far would I fly and rest me,
The wilderness my home would I make.
I would escape far from the stormwinds,
Tempest, or fear of death.

4. *Hospodin jest můj pastýř*

*Hospodin jest můj pastýř;
Nebudu míti nedostatku.
Na pastvách zelených pase mne,
K vodám tichým mne přivodí.
Duši mou občerstvuje;
Vodí mne po stezkách
Spravedlnosti pro jméno své.
Byť se mi dostalo jíti
Přes údolí stínu smrti:
Nebudut' se báti zlého,
Nebo Ty se mnou jsi;
A prut Tvůj a hůl Tvá,
Tot' mne potěšuje.*

My shepherd is the Lord

Oh, my shepherd is the Lord,
I shall not want, shall want for nothing.
In the soft pastures green,
And beside waters clear, He leadeth me.
He restoreth my soul,
Leadeth me in the paths,
Where I shall glorify His name.
Even though I must walk through the valley
Of the shadow of death,
I shan't fear, shan't fear of evil
For Thou art with me now.
And Thy rod, and Thy staff,
They comfort me.

5. *Bože! Bože! píseň novou*

*Bože! Bože! píseň novou
Zpívati budu Tobě na loutně,
A žalmy Tobě prozpěvovati.
Na každý den dobrořečiti budu Tobě
A chváliti jméno Tvé na věky věků.
Hospodin jistě veliký jest
A vši chvály hodný,
A velikost jeho
Nemůž vystižena býti.
O slávě a kráse a velebnosti Tvé,
I o věcech Tvých předivných mluvíti budu.
A moc přehrozných skutků Tvých
Všichni rozhlášovati budou;
I já důstojnost Tvou
Budu vypravovati.*

Songs of gladness will I sing Thee

Songs of gladness will I sing Thee,
Telling thy praises on a psaltery;
Oh, let my song find favor in Thine eyes.
I will delight in exalting Thee,
Every day will I bless Thy name, and I shall sing to my Savior.
Lord, my God, Thou art all my delight,
And great is Thy mercy,
And who shall declare.
Thy greatness and Thy glory?
Oh, glory to Thee and to Thy works,
Thy greatness my song shall extoll, and praise Thy mercy.
Yea, men shall tell of Thy great mercy and love,
And Thy wondrous insight.
And I shall loudly sing
Of Thy greatness and Thy power.

6. *Slyš, o Bože, volání mé*

*Slyš, o Bože, volání mé,
Pozoruj modlitby mé!
Nebo jsi býval útočiště mé
A pevná věže před tváří nepřítele.
Budu bydleti v stánku Tvém na věky,
Schráním se v skrýši křídel Tvých.
Bože! Bůh silný můj Ty jsi,
Tebe t' hned v jitře hledám,
Tebe žízní duše má,
Po Tobě touží tělo mé,
V zemi žíznivé a vyprahlé,
V níž není vody;
A tak, abych Tobě dobrořečil
A s radostným rťm prozpěvováním
Chválila by Tě ústa má.*

7. *Při řekách babylonských*

*Při řekách babylonských,
Tam jsme sedávali a plakávali,
Rozpomínajíce se na Sion.
Na vrby v té zemi
Zavěšovali jsme citary své,
A když se tam dotazovali nás ti,
Kteříž nás zajali,
Na slova písničky říkajíce:
Zpívejte nám některou píseň Sionskou,
Odpovídali jsme:
Kterakž bychom mohli zpívati
Píseň Hospodinovu
V zemi cizozemců?
Jestliže se zapomenu na tebe,
O Jeruzaléme,
O, zapomeniž i pravice má umění svého.*

8. *Popatřiž na mne a smiluj se nade mnou*

*Popatřiž na mne a smiluj se nade mnou;
Neboť jsem opuštěný a ztrápený.
Soužení srdce mého rozmnožují se,
Z úzkostí mých vyved' mne.
Smiluj se nade mnou!
Viz trápení mé a bídu mou
A odpust' všechny hříchy mé.
Ostříhej duše mé a vytrhni mne
At' nejsem zahanben,
Neboť v Tebe doufám.*

Hear my prayer, Lord my God

Hear, O Lord, my bitter cry,
Lend Thine ear unto my prayer.
For Thou hast ever been my fort and shield,
And Thou shalt trample upon the dread enemy.
Let me dwell with Thee, Lord, forevermore with Thee;
Hide me, O Lord, within Thy wings.
Lord, Thou art my tower of strength,
Lord, I will seek Thee early.
My soul thirsteth after Thee,
And my flesh longeth after Thee
In a dry and thirsty, barren land
Where there is no water;
And thus will I glorify and bless Thee,
And lift my hands in prayer and adoration,
Singing Thy praises ever.

By the shore of the river Babylon

By the shore of the river Babylon,
There we sat and wept, yea, we wept,
When we remembered Zion.
And we did hang our harps
On the willows that did stand in its midst.
For they that had made us captives in bondage
Called for a joyful song.
Yea, they that wasted us said unto us:
Sing unto us a song of Zion.
But we said to our foes:
How shall we sing our glad songs to you,
Sing the song of God, our Lord,
Being in a strange land?
If I e'er forget my land,
O Jerusalem,
Then may my right hand also forget all of its cunning.

O Lord, have mercy and turn Thou Thy face to me

O Lord, have mercy and turn Thou Thy face to me
For my soul is desolate and sore distressed.
The troubles of my heart lie heavy upon me,
From my distress, save me, Lord.
Have mercy upon me!
Look on my affliction and pain
And forgive me my heavy sins
Oh Lord, my deliverer,
Let me not be ashamed,
For I trust in Thee, Lord.

9. *Pozdvihuji oči svých k horám*

*Pozdvihuji oči svých k horám,
Odkud by mi přišla pomoc.
Pomoc má jest od Hospodina,
Kterýž učinil nebe i zemi.
Nedopustit', aby se pohnouti
Měla noha Tvá,
Nebo nedřímět' strážný Tvůj.
Aj, nedřímět', ovšem nespí ten,
Kterýž ostříhá Izraele.*

My eyes will I to the hills lift up

My eyes will I to the hills lift up,
Whence my only help now cometh.
My help cometh from the Lord of Hosts,
For He made the earth and the heavens.
For He will not suffer thy foot to be moved,
Nor shalt thou fall.
He that keepeth thee slumb'reth not.
Behold, slumber He shall not, nor sleep,
He that keepeth Israel.

10. *Zpívejte Hospodinu píseň novou,*

*Zpívejte Hospodinu píseň novou,
Nebot' jest divné věci učinil;
Zvuk vydejte, prozpěvujte
A žalmy zpívejte.
Zvuč, moře, i to, což v něm jest;
Okršlek světa, i ti, což na něm bydlí.
Řeky rukama plesejte,
Spolu s nimi i hory prozpěvujte.
Plesej, pole, a vše, což na něm;
Plesej, země, zvuč i moře,
I což v něm jest.*

Oh, sing unto the Lord a joyful song

Oh, sing unto the Lord a joyful song.
He with His right hand bringeth victory.
Make a joyful noise to greet Him,
Oh earth, rejoice and give praise.
Roar, sea, and the fullness thereof;
The swelling earth and they who dwell therein.
Floods shall clap their hands, hills be joyful,
Praising the Lord and all His wonders.
Dance, ye fields of golden corn;
Let the woods and forests
Sing the praises of the Lord.

Seattle-based lyric baritone **Darrell J. Jordan** has been praised for his “shining, beautiful voice” (Broadway World), his “expressive baritone and facial expressions” (The SunBreak) and has been called “the star of the show” (Columbia HeartBeat). He holds a B.A. in both Psychology and Music and a M.M. in Voice Performance from the University of Missouri, and a D.M.A. in Voice Performance from the University of Washington.

In demand as a recitalist and concert soloist, his recent engagements have been with Amherst Early Music Festival, the Odyssey Chamber Music Series, Rolla Choral Arts Society, Choral Arts Alliance of Missouri, the Missouri Symphony, the Southside Philharmonic Orchestra, the Toledo Symphony, Thalia Symphony, Olympia Chamber Orchestra, and the Seattle Art Song Society. Recent opera credits include the St. Louis Opera Collective, Gateway Opera, Lawrence Opera Theatre, Landlocked Opera, the Puget Sound Concert Opera, Operamuse, Seattle Modern Opera Company, Pacific Northwest Opera, OperaBend, the Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Seattle, Opera on Tap, and Seattle Opera (outreach cast). Additionally, he will debut a world premiere song cycle in Montreal in the summer of 2021. He is a member and co-artistic director of the nationally recognized, award-winning professional vocal chamber ensemble, Vox Nova.

Associate Cathedral Organist **Samuel Libra** has been on staff at St. James since 2015 and enjoys a varied ministry, working with the Cathedral Youth Music Program, adult choirs, and professional ensembles. As an organist, he has performed with the Cathedral Cantorei and Chamber Orchestra in a number of sacred masterworks, as well as area ensembles such as the Seattle Youth Symphony, Sammamish Symphony, Seattle Bach Choir, and others. He is a doctoral candidate at the University of Washington as a student of Dr. Carole Terry, where his research focuses on organ and symphonic music of 19th-century France and Belgium.