

MUSICAL PRAYER

MARK HILLIARD WILSON

*St. James Cathedral Guitarist*

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*Lift ev'ry voice and sing*

John Rosamond Johnson  
1873–1954

arr. Mark Hilliard Wilson

*Lift every voice and sing*, known as the Black National Anthem, began as a poem written in 1899 by James Weldon Johnson, to be read at a school assembly the following year, honoring the birthday of Abraham Lincoln. When he finished, he asked his musician brother, J. Rosamond Johnson, to set it to music, and it was first performed in 1900 at that assembly, with a chorus of 500 schoolchildren.

Lift ev'ry voice and sing, Till earth and heaven ring, Ring with the harmonies of Liberty; Let our rejoicing rise High as the list'ning skies, Let it resound loud as the rolling sea. Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us, Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us; Facing the rising sun of our new day begun, Let us march on till victory is won.	Stony the road we trod, Bitter the chast'ning rod, Felt in the days when hope unborn had died; Yet with a steady beat, Have not our weary feet Come to the place for which our fathers sighed? We have come over a way that with tears has been watered, We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered, Out from the gloomy past, Till now we stand at last Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.	God of our weary years, God of our silent tears, Thou who has brought us thus far on the way; Thou who has by Thy might, Led us into the light, Keep us forever in the path, we pray. Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee, Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee; Shadowed beneath Thy hand, May we forever stand. True to our God, true to our native land. — James Weldon Johnson (1871–1938)
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*Come Sunday*

Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington  
1899–1974

arr. Mark Hilliard Wilson

Duke Ellington wrote *Come Sunday* as part of his extended jazz suite *Black, Brown, and Beige*, introduced at Carnegie Hall on January 23, 1943 to a mostly white audience. The suite was meant by Ellington to illustrate three eras in African-American history: Black (slavery), Brown (emancipation and service in American wars), and Beige (contemporary 1940s), with *Come Sunday* representing the importance of church-going to Black Americans. Only the melody of this song was played by violin and alto saxophone in the premiere. The suite was panned by critics, calling it “pretentious,” and he performed it a few more times before shelving it until he collaborated with gospel singer Mahalia Jackson fifteen years later. Together, they recorded a revised version of the suite in 1958, the first time lyrics to the song were heard, as follows.

Lord, dear Lord of love, God almighty God above,  
Please look down and see my people through.

Lord, dear Lord of love, God almighty God above,  
Please look down and see my people through.

I believe the sun and moon will shine up in the sky,  
When the day is gray, I know it's clouds passing by.

He'll give peace and comfort to every troubled mind  
Come Sunday, oh come Sunday, that's the day.

Often we'll feel weary, but he knows our every care,  
Go to him in secret, he will hear your every prayer.

Lillies of the valley they neither toil nor spin,  
And flowers bloom and springtime birds sing.

Often we'll feel weary, but he knows our every care,  
Go to him in secret, he will hear your every prayer.

Up from dawn till sunset, man work hard all day,  
Come Sunday, oh come Sunday that's the day.

*Two Nocturnes* (2019)

Quinn Mason  
b. 1996

I follow with two short nocturnes by the young composer Quinn Mason. The nocturne is a form that was developed by the Irishman John Field in the 19th century, and composers from Chopin to Debussy to Quinn Mason have been attracted to representing in music the magical world found in the stillness of the night. The first nocturne has a lamenting character and a rhythmic feature that reminds me of a sarabande, with a slight emphasis on the second beat. Sarabandes are in a count of 3 and this nocturne is in a count of 4. The initial statement repeats with a collapsing line of dissonances that then conclude with a rest at the end of the phrase, before starting again. The first nocturne feels like a lament and when I asked the composer about this, he wrote, "I believe this nocturne to convey a feeling of loneliness and emptiness, which can be associated with loss. But it's not to be seen as grief, but tranquility as though the person grieving is at peace." To me the second nocturne then explores this feeling of peace and moving forward, while not being unmarked by the previous nocturne's content.

"Vespers" from *A Soldier's Sonata*, Op. 2 (2007)

Thomas Flippin  
b. 1983

Thomas Flippin's "Vespers" is the second movement from his work *A Soldier's Sonata* and features a subtitle, "Deus, in adiutorium meum intende. Domine, ad adiuvandam me festina." (O God, reach out to help me. O Lord, hasten to assist me.) The intense chords featured in the outer sections contrast with a hopeful central section, with the lightness of a flowing arpeggio and glistening dissonances of open strings against notes placed high up on the fretboard.

*Hic est Michael archangelus*

Vicente Lusitano  
d. after 1561  
arr. Mark Hilliard Wilson

The composer Vincente Lusitano was most likely born to a white father and a black mother and is understood to have been born in Olivencia, Portugal. Around 1556 he married and converted to Protestantism and disappears from the historical record around 1561, after seeking refuge in the court of Duke Christoph of Württemberg, in what we now call Germany. Here is a great website to explore more info: <https://blackcentraleurope.com/sources/1500-1750/the-musical-theorist-vicente-lusitano-1561/>

*Etude No. 13* (2016)

Quinn Mason

For more information on the gifted young composer Quinn Mason, visit [www.masonianmusic.com](http://www.masonianmusic.com).

*Sicilian Mariners' Hymn: O sanctissima, O piissima*

arr. Justin Holland  
1819–1886

Justin Holland was a prolific composer, arranger, performer, teacher, and civil rights activist. Born in 1819 in Norfolk, Virginia to free parents, he was the first African-American classical guitarist. Tragically, his parents died when he was 14, and he left Virginia in 1833 to work in Boston. It was there that he made the acquaintance of the Signor Mariano Perez, and studied the Spanish guitar with him. Holland eventually moved to Cleveland, Ohio, where he married and had children and established a thriving life in teaching music to both white and black Americans. He worked with the Underground Railroad to liberate many enslaved in the South.

The Sicilian Mariners' Hymn or *O sanctissima, O piissima*, (O most holy, O most loving) is a

familiar hymn seeking prayers from the Blessed Virgin Mary. Its first known publication was in London in 1792, and there is no evidence that this melody comes from Sicily nor that mariners sang this. This does not detract from its comfort in familiarity and the joy in the invention of Mr. Holland's variations. It is notable this melody has been borrowed for the German Christmas carol *O du fröhliche* (Oh how joyful), the English recessional hymn *Lord, dismiss us with Thy blessing*, and most notably the first half of the American Civil Rights anthem *We shall overcome*.

O sanctissima,	<i>O most holy,</i>	Ecce debiles,	<i>Look, we are weak</i>
O piissima,	<i>O most loving,</i>	perquam flebiles;	<i>and deeply deplorable;</i>
dulcis Virgo Maria!	<i>sweet Virgin Mary!</i>	salva nos, o Maria!	<i>save us, o Mary!</i>
Mater amata,	<i>Beloved Mother,</i>	Tolle languores,	<i>Take away our lassitude,</i>
intemerata,	<i>undefiled,</i>	sana dolores;	<i>heal our pains;</i>
ora, ora pro nobis.	<i>pray, pray for us.</i>	ora, ora pro nobis.	<i>pray, pray for us.</i>
Tu solatium	<i>You are solace</i>	Virgo, respice,	<i>Virgin, look at us,</i>
et refugium,	<i>and refuge,</i>	Mater, aspice;	<i>Mother, care for us;</i>
Virgo Mater Maria.	<i>Virgin Mother Mary.</i>	audi nos, o Maria!	<i>hear us, o Mary!</i>
Quidquid optamus,	<i>Whatever we wish,</i>	Tu medicinam	<i>You bring</i>
per te speramus;	<i>we hope it through you;</i>	portas divinam;	<i>divine medicine;</i>
ora, ora pro nobis.	<i>pray, pray for us.</i>	ora, ora pro nobis.	<i>pray, pray for us.</i>

**MARK HILLIARD WILSON** brings joy and technical finesse to the listener while integrating music from diverse backgrounds and different ages with a compelling story and a wry sense of humor. Performing regularly at festivals and concert series, Wilson has distinguished himself as a unique voice with programs that feature his own transcriptions of both the well known and the obscure. Wilson's compositions for the guitar have been appearing on stages throughout the Northwest US and Canada for over 15 years. He works in is the relatively unexplored genre of an ensemble of multiple guitars as the conductor, composer, arranger, and music director to the Guitar Orchestra of Seattle. Wilson has taught at Whatcom Community College and Bellevue College.

Wilson's CD *El Sueno del Camino* is the product of a series of concerts he played along the Camino de Santiago de Compostela in northern Spain. Wilson has been busy promoting his latest CD, a Guitar Orchestra recording that features compositions for 10 guitars, inspired by the pilgrimage to Spain as well as pilgrimages closer to home: Chuckanut Drive and the Edmund Pettis Bridge. Since the start of 2019 he has produced concerts for the Guitar Orchestra of Seattle in fun and unusual venues for the classical guitar, such as the restored bar "The Rendezvous" in The Jewelbox Theater (built in 1932 as a movie theater); the experimental cafe theater Cafe Nordo; and the former Elliot Bay Book Company location in Pioneer Square. Solo engagements have taken him to numerous living rooms and gardens across Seattle through the organization Groupmuse. The summer of 2019, Wilson was engaged in 10 concerts over an 8-week spread, where he played solo concerts, a concerto written for him and the Octava orchestra, and a series of concerts in Portland with the soprano Jessica Israels and baritone Erik Hundtoft. Shortly after this, Wilson was the guest guitarist with the Sun Valley Symphony.

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