

MUSICAL PRAYER

DAVID P. HOFFMAN

baritone

KERRY O'CONNOR

piano

Watchful's Song, from *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1944–6)

Ralph Vaughan Williams

The Puritan preacher John Bunyan (1628–88) was jailed for twelve years after the Restoration of the English monarchy. While in prison he wrote his large-scale allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, still today a central text of Christian poetry. Ralph Vaughan Williams first set words from *The Pilgrim's Progress* to music for the *English Hymnal* (1904), and wrote at least six more works based on the poem, most notably the Fifth Symphony (1938–43), until finally coalescing those thoughts into his final opera. Its dream-like tableaux and forty-one vocal parts make it difficult to stage, as does its unabashedly spiritual topic. Early on, the lead character, Pilgrim, restlessly cries out, “What shall I do to be saved?” He is encouraged by the Evangelist, assisted in worship by the Three Shining Ones, and anointed by the Interpreter, who guides him into the House Beautiful. The stage is dark for the close of Act 1, an aria marked “Nocturne.” It is sung by Watchful, the guard outside the house. Initially, it alternates restful static harmony with meanderingly chant-like vocal lines. The aria's second half features gentle counterpoint in woodwind solos and vocally is fluid and melodic, akin to the *Five Mystical Songs* written thirty-five years earlier both in music and in spirit.

— Gary D. Cannon

Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

Except the Lord keep the house, the watchman waketh but in vain.

The Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep peace.

The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet.

Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

My help cometh even from the Lord, who hath made heaven and earth.

He will not suffer thy foot to be moved; he that keepeth thee will not sleep.

Behold he that keepeth thee shall neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord himself is thy keeper, He shall preserve thee from all evil:

it is even he that shall keep thy soul, from this time forth forever more.

Into thy hands I commend my spirit, O Lord.

— John Bunyan (1628–1688)

George Herbert (1593–1633) was born into seventeenth-century English aristocracy, and after a brief period in Parliament settled into the peaceful life of a parish priest. In this capacity he was greatly renowned for his caring demeanor, giving ever loving attention to needy parishioners, but through his poetry he has also merited an earthly immortality. He was one of the so-called Metaphysical poets—John Donne also among them—whose sacred writings highlight conceptual relationships between matters human and divine. In Herbert’s poetry you will find metaphors taken to extreme, following each other in rapid succession, like a litany of indirect clarifications.

Also born into wealth was the composer Ralph Vaughan Williams, equally acclaimed for his orchestral, choral, and solo vocal music. Vaughan Williams allegedly described himself as a “cheerful agnostic,” but was often drawn to set words of deep spiritualism, such as the poetry of Walt Whitman or the King James translation of the Bible, finding the text’s inherent musicality as moving as its intended subject matter. This is certainly clear in his settings of George Herbert, the *Five Mystical Songs*.

Each of Vaughan Williams’s chosen Herbert poems deals with different allegories for the human relationship to the divine. The first song, “Easter,” supplies a particularly fine example of Herbert’s poetic style: in the first stanza alone the human heart is attributed with the abilities to resurrect like Christ, sing praise, grasp hands, decompose to dust, turn alchemically to gold, and become perfectly just. Each action is a unique metaphor for the heart’s (i.e., any human’s) potential connection to divinity. The second song, “I got me flowers,” parallels the daily sunrise with Christ’s resurrection. The third, “Love bade me welcome,” is a conversation between the poet and Christ as Love personified. Near its end, Vaughan Williams quotes the traditional Corpus Christi chant *O sacrum convivium* as an aural or liturgical metaphor for the Eucharist. “The Call” has become a hymn popular throughout Christianity. The final “Antiphon” is an ebullient paean of praise with examples of subtle text-painting. Note, for example, Vaughan Williams’s use of high voices (sopranos and tenors) when addressing heaven, and of low voices (altos and basses) for earth.

— Gary D. Cannon

1. Easter

Rise, heart; thy Lord is risen. Sing his praise
Without delays,
Who takes thee by the hand, that thou likewise
With him may’st rise;
That, as his death calcined* thee to dust,
His life may make thee gold, and much more, Just.
Awake, my lute, and struggle for thy part
With all thy art.
The cross taught all wood to resound his name
Who bore the same.
His stretched sinews taught all strings, what key
Is best to celebrate the most high day.
Consort both heart and lute, and twist a song
Pleasant and long:
Or since all music is but three parts vied,
And multiplied;

O let thy blessed Spirit bear a part,
And make up our defects with his sweet art.

** calcine = to heat to point of chemical decomposition.*

2. I got me flowers

I got me flowers to strew thy way;
I got me boughs off many a tree:
But thou wast up by break of day,
And brought’st thy sweets along with thee.
The Sun arising in the East,
Though he give light, and the East perfume;
If they should offer to contest
With thy arising, they presume.
Can there be any day but this,
Though many suns to shine endeavour?
We count three hundred, but we miss:
There is but one, and that one ever.

3. Love bade me welcome

Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin.

But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack

From my first entrance in,

Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,

If I lacked any thing.

A guest, I answered, worthy to be here:

Love said, You shall be he.

I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,

I cannot look on thee.

Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,

Who made the eyes but I?

Truth, Lord, but I have marred them: let my shame

Go where it doth deserve.

And know you not, says Love, who bore the blame?

My dear, then I will serve.

You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat:

So I did sit and eat.

4. The Call

Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life:

Such a Way, as gives us breath:

Such a Truth, as ends all strife:

Such a Life, as killeth death.

Come, my Light, my Feast, my Strength:

Such a Light, as shows a feast:

Such a Feast, as mends in length:

Such a Strength, as makes his guest.

Come, my Joy, my Love, my Heart:

Such a Joy, as none can move:

Such a Love, as none can part:

Such a Heart, as joys in love.

5. Antiphon

Let all the world in every corner sing,

My God and King.

The heavens are not too high,

His praise may thither fly:

The earth is not too low,

His praises there may grow.

Let all the world in every corner sing,

My God and King.

The Church with Psalms must shout,

No door can keep them out:

But above all, the heart

Must bear the longest part.

Let all the world in every corner sing,

My God and King.

—George Herbert (1593–1633)



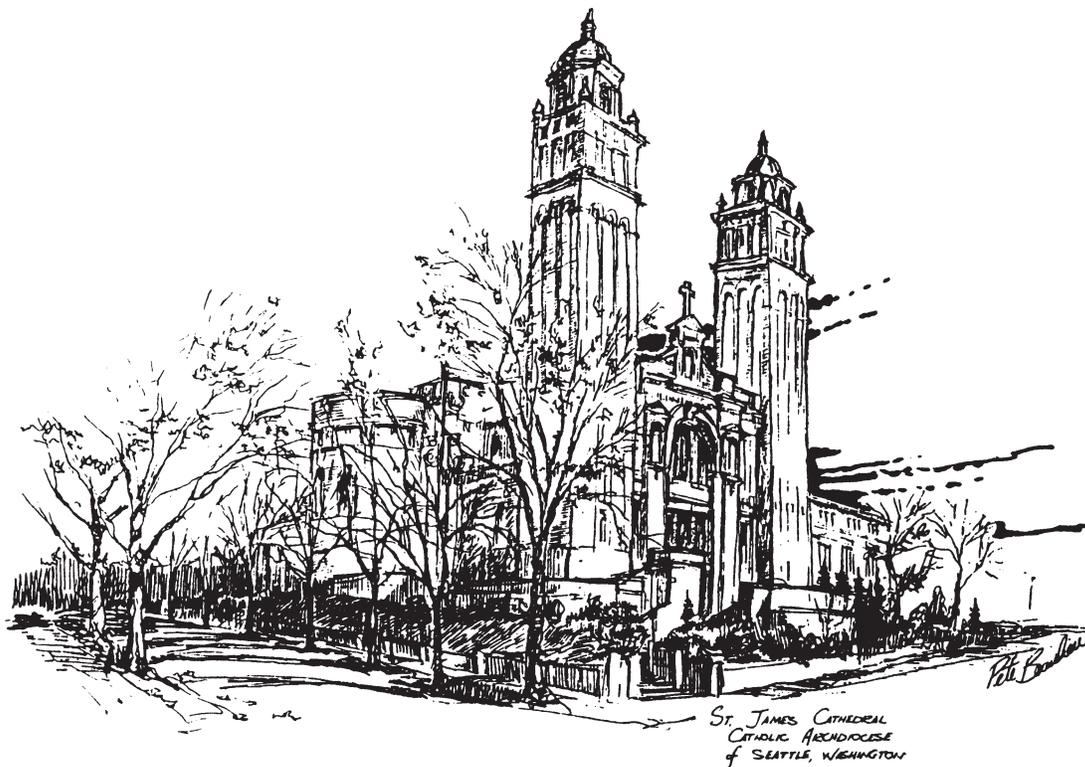
DAVID HOFFMAN has enjoyed a long music career both collaborating with and as a member of a number of Seattle-based ensembles, including the St. James Cathedral Cantorei and Choir, Seattle Symphony Chorale, Byrd Ensemble, Opus 7, Seattle Pro Musica, and many others. As a soloist, Mr. Hoffman has enjoyed many opportunities primarily as Bass/Baritone soloist for St. James Cathedral in Seattle, but also Paper Puppet Opera's *Winterreise* productions, and a host of other collaborations around the city. Growing up in the Seattle area, Mr. Hoffman enjoyed an early start to his music education as a member of the esteemed Northwest Boychoir. David continued his pursuit with a minor in Performance Voice from Harvey Mudd College and the Claremont Colleges Joint Music Program. After a brief career as soloist and section

leader for the San Diego Master Chorale, Mr. Hoffman moved back to Seattle where he has enjoyed the many aforementioned opportunities granted him. David has truly appreciated all of the kindness afforded him by the Seattle music community, St. James Cathedral, and the many organizations he has worked with throughout his career.



Winning a Mozart piano concerto competition provided an opportunity for pianist **KERRY O'CONNOR**'s professional debut at the age of 15. She went on to further her studies at the Conservatory of Music at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California focusing on piano and vocal performance. At the Conservatory, discovering a talent for composition changed her focus to music theory and composition while still enjoying a vigorous professional performing schedule as a pianist and vocalist. Moving back to her birthplace of Seattle after college, Kerry has continually enjoyed a professional career in many genres including jazz, rock, musical theater, sacred and classical music. She has also recorded two albums of original music, and enjoys playing in the local improv scene, when possible! Kerry has a passion for teaching

music and is proud of her thriving private studio on the eastside. She also enjoys a variety of musical roles at Holy Family, Kirkland and Mary Queen of Peace, Sammamish as an accompanist, children's choir director, director of the vigil choir at MQP, and cantor. She is thrilled to have this opportunity to accompany her longtime friend David Hoffman in such a sacred and beautiful space.



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