

BEFORE THE WEST

for SSAA divisi a cappella

HENRIK DAHLGREN

(2024)

PERUSAL SCORE

PROGRAMME NOTES

This poem by Emily Dickinson is, as much of her poetry, about life, death, and the afterlife. What happens to us when we die? And is death just another beginning? A new dawn? The piece arose from a composer's residency at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity in Canada, where I had the opportunity to work with all professional choir Pro Coro Canada, their conductor Michael Zaugg, and the Danish/Swedish conductor Lone Larsen. The focus point for the piece was to explore how I, as a composer, could find new ways to utilise the many different timbres of the human voice and what it is capable of producing, and even if I, by no means explored any extreme qualities of the voice, I broadened my own perspective as a composer.

In the music, I have tried to bring out the conflict between death and dawn, and musically I want people to feel that they are on the verge of something they do not know. The fear we feel, facing something new and uncertain, standing in the middle looking back, not knowing if we are at the end of the road, the sunset, or at the beginning of something new: the dawn.

The piece was originally written for mixed voices and premiered by Pro Coro Canada at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity on the 29th of February 2020, under the direction of conductor Katy Harmer. Lone Larsen later premiered the piece in Europe, and Sweden, with her ensemble VoNo, as a part of their conceptual performance "I Am Like Many". This version for upper voices was premiered by the Vermont Chamber Artists, conducted by Jessie Pierpoint.

Henrik Dahlgren

TEXT

*Behind me dips eternity
Before me immortality
Myself the term between
Death but the drift of eastern gray
Dissolving into dawn away
Before the west begin*

Emily Dickinson (1830 - 1886)

Composed 2024

Duration c. 7 minutes

First performance Vermont Chamber Artists | conducted by Jessie Pierpoint
25 July 2024 | Isham Family Farm, Williston, VT, USA

More information www.henrikdahlgren.com

Originally composed for mixed choir, dedicated to Michael Zaugg and Pro Coro Canada

BEFORE THE WEST

for SSAA divisi a cappella

EMILY DICKINSON

HENRIK DAHLGREN

Senza misura (♩ = c. 50)

SOPRANO 1

SOPRANO 2

ALTO 1

ALTO 2

for rehearsal only

p *mp dolce* *p*

mm ma-m-m-m ma-m-m-m (mm) ma-m-m-m ma-m-m-m (mm)

mm

S1

S2

A1

A2

p *gliss.*

Be - hind me. (me.) (me.)

ma-m-m-m ma-m-m-m (mm)

Dips e - ter - ni -

S1 *simile* Gliss individually to 'me'
gliss.
 Be - fore me. (me.) (me.)

S2
 ma - m - m - m ma - m - m - m (mm)

A1

A2
 ty.

S1

S2
 ma - m - m - m ma - m - m - m (mm) *niente*
 (mm)

A1
niente
 m - or - ta - li - ty.

A2
niente
 I - - - m - or - ta - li - ty.

A battuta, poco più mosso (♩ = c. 60)

2

S1

S2

S3 *p pesante*
ma-ma-ma- ma...

A1 *pp*
mm

A2 mm

A3 *p pesante*
ma-ma-ma- ma...

6

S1 *pp*
mm

S2 *pp*
mm

S3
ma_ ma-ma ma_ ma-ma ma-ma-ma- ma...

A1

A2 mm

A3
ma_ ma-ma ma_ ma-ma ma-ma-ma- ma...

10

S1

S2

S3

A1

A2

A3

ma ma-ma ma ma-ma-ma- ma...

ma ma-ma ma ma-ma ma-ma-ma- ma...

mm

mm

mm

mm

mm

mm

14

S1

S2

S3

A1

A2

A3

ma ma-ma ma ma-ma

ma ma-ma ma ma-ma

cresc. poco a poco

p

p

p

cresc. poco a poco

mm

mm

mm

mm

mm

mm

19

S1 *p* *mm*

S2 *p* *mm*

S3 *cresc. poco a poco*
ma-ma-ma- ma... ma-ma ma_ ma-ma

A1 *p* *mm*

A2 *p* *mm*

A3 *cresc. poco a poco*
ma-ma-ma- ma... ma_ ma-ma ma_ ma-ma

24

S1 *mf*
(mm)* → aa... ma ma-ma ma_ ma-ma ma_ ma-ma ma_ ma-ma

S2 *mf*
(mm)* → aa... m-ma ma_ ma-ma ma_ ma-ma ma_ ma-ma

S3 *mf*
ma-ma-ma-ma ma_ ma-ma-ma ma-ma ma-ma-ma-ma ma_ ma-ma ma_ ma-ma ma-ma-ma-ma ma_ ma-ma ma_ ma-ma

A1 *mf*
(mm)* → aa... ma-ma ma_ ma-ma ma_ ma-ma ma_ ma-ma

A2 *mf*
(mm)* → aa... ma-ma ma_ ma-ma ma_ ma-ma ma_ ma-ma

A3 *mf*
ma_ ma-ma ma_ ma-ma-ma ma-ma ma-ma-ma-ma ma_ ma-ma ma_ ma-ma ma-ma-ma-ma ma_ ma-ma ma_ ma-ma

* = Open gradually to 'aa' (as in "myself")

poco rit.

poco meno mosso

27

mp dim. poco a poco

S1 ma ma-ma My - - self. The term bet - ween, the term bet - ween.

S2 ma ma-ma My - - self. The term bet - ween, term bet -

S3 ma-ma-ma-ma ma ma-ma My - self. The term bet - ween, the

A1 ma ma-ma My - - self. The term bet - ween the term bet - ween,

A2 ma ma-ma My - - self. The m bet the term bet -

A3 ma-ma-ma-ma ma ma-ma My - self. The term bet - ween,

30

pp *mp* *p*

S1 the term bet-ween. Death Daw-n - n - n-aw-n - n - n.

S2 ween, the term bet - ween. Death but the drift of

S3 term bet-ween, the term bet-ween. Death but the drift of

A1 the term bet-ween. Death

A2 ween, the term bet - ween. Death. but the drift of

A3 the term between, the term bet-ween. Death but the drift of

34

S1 *mf* *p* *simile*
Daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n. Daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n.

S2 *mf* *p* *simile*
east - ern gray. Daw-n. Daw-n.

S3 *mf* *p* *simile*
east - ern gray. Daw-n. Daw-n.

A1 *pp* *mp sotto voce*
Death.

A2 *mp sotto voce*
east - ern gray. Death.

A3 *mp sotto voce*
east - ern gray. Death.

40

S1 *mf* *p*
Daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n. Daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n. Daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n.

S2 *mf* *p*
Daw-n. Daw-n. Daw-n - n - n - aw - n.

S3 *mf* *p*
Daw-n. Daw-n. Daw-n.

A1

A2 *pp*
Death.

A3 *pp*
Death.

accel. poco a poco (until m. 56)

45

simile *mf* *p*

S1 Daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n. Daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n, Daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n. Daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n.

simile *mf* *p*

S2 Daw-n - n - n - aw - n. Daw-n - n - n - aw - n. Daw-n - n - n - aw - n. Daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n.

simile *mf* *p*

S3 Daw-n. Daw-n. Daw-n. Daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n.

A1 *pp* *p*

Death. Death.

A2 *pp* *p*

Death. Death.

A3 *p*

Death.



49

simile *cresc. poco a poco* *f*

S1 Daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n. Daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n, Daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n. Daw-n - n - n -

simile *cresc. poco a poco* *f* *mp*

S2 Daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n. Daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n, Daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n. Daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n.

simile *cresc. poco a poco* *f* *mp*

S3 Daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n. Daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n. Daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n. Daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n.

A1 *mp sotto voce*

Death. Death *mp sotto voce*

A2 *mp sotto voce*

Death. Death *mp sotto voce*

A3 *mp sotto voce*

Death. Death



53 *mp* *simile*

S1 aw-n-n-n. Daw-n-n-n-aw-n-n-n. Daw-n-n-n-aw-n-n-n, Dawn.

S2 *simile*
Daw-n-n-n-aw-n-n-n. Daw-n-n-n-aw-n-n-n, Daw-n-n-n-aw-n-n-n.

S3 *simile*
Daw-n-n-n-aw-n-n-n. Daw-n-n-n-aw-n-n-n. Daw-n-n-n-aw-n-n-n.

A1 Death. Death. Death.

A2 Death. Death. Death.

A3 Death. Death. Death.

poco più mosso (♩ = c. 60)

56 *mf* *f* *simile*

S1 Dawn. Daw-n-n-n-aw-n-n-n. Daw-n-n-n-aw-n-n-n. Daw-n-

S2 *f subito* *f* *mp* *simile*
Death. Daw-n-n-n-aw-n-n-n. Daw-n-n-n-aw-n-n-n. Daw-n-n-n-

S3 *f subito* *f* *m* *simile*
Death. Daw-n-n-n-aw-n-n-n. Daw-n-n-n-aw-n-n-n. Daw-n-n-n-aw-n-

A1 *f* *mp* *simile*
Daw-n-n-n-aw-n-n-n. Daw-n-n-n. Daw-n-n-n. Daw-n-n-n. Daw-n-n-n.

A2 *f subito* *mp* *f* *mp* *simile*
Death! Daw-n-n-n. Daw-n-n-n. Daw-n-n-n. Daw-n-n-n. Daw-

A3 *mp* *simile*
Daw-n-n-n. Daw-n-n-n. Daw-n-n-n. Daw-n-n-n. Daw-n-n-n.

59

S1 *mf* *p subito* *ff*
n - n - aw - n - n - n. Dawn.. Dawn.. Dawn.. Dawn..

S2 *mf* *mp* *ff*
aw - n - n - n. Daw - n - n - n. Dawn.. Dawn.. Dawn.. Dawn..

S3 *mf* *p subito* *ff*
n - n. Dawn. Dawn.. Daw - n - n - n - aw - n - n - n. Dawn.

A1 *mf* *p subito* *ff*
Daw - n - n - n. Daw - n - n - n. Dawn. Dawn.. Daw - n - n - aw - n - n - n. Dawn.

A2 *mf* *p subito* *ff*
n - n - n. Daw - n - n - n. Dawn.. Dawn.. Dawn.. Dawn..

A3 *mf* *p subito* *ff*
Daw - n - n - n. Daw - n - n - n. Daw - n - n - n. Dawn. Dawn.. Daw - n - n - aw - n - n - n. Dawn.



63

rit. *a tempo*

S1 *ff agitato* *mf* *p teneramente e legato*
Dawn.. Dawn.. Dawn..

S2 *ff agitato* *mf* *p teneramente e legato*
Dawn.. Dawn.. A - way.

S3 *ff agitato* *mf* *p teneramente e legato*
Dawn. Dawn. Dawn.. A - way. A - way.

A1 *ff agitato* *mf* *p teneramente e legato*
Dawn.. Dawn. A - way. A - way. A -

A2 *ff agitato* *mf* *p teneramente e legato*
Dawn.. Dawn.. A - way. A - way. A -

A3 *ff agitato* *mf* *p teneramente e legato*
Dawn.. Dawn.. A - way. A - way. A - way. A -



69

S1 niente (nn)

S2 niente *pp legato* A - way. A - way. A -

S3 niente *pp legato* A - way. A - way. A -

A1 niente *pp legato* way. A - way. A - way. A -

A2 *pp legato* way. A - way. A -

A3 *pp legato* way. A - way. A -



79

S1 *f* *mf* Dav - n - n - n - aw - n - n - n.

S2 *pp sempre* *p cresc. poco a poco* way.. A - way.. A - way. A - way. A - way. A - way. A - way.. A -

S3 *pp sempre* *p cresc. poco a poco* way.. A - way. A - way.. A - way. A - way. A - way.. A -

A1 *pp sempre* *p cresc. poco a poco* way.. A - way. A - way. A - way. A - way. A - way.. A -

A2 *pp sempre* *p cresc. poco a poco* way.. A - way. A - way. A - way. A - way. A - way.. A -

A3 *pp sempre* *mf subito (non dim.) p cresc. poco a poco* way. way. A - way. A - way. Death. A - way. A -



86

f subito (non dim) *mp dolce*

S1 Death... Dis

mf

S2 way. A - way. A - way. A - way.

mf *mp dolce*

S3 way. A - way. A - way. A - way. Dis -

mf *mp dolce*

A1 way. A - way. A - way. A - way. Dis -

mf *mp dolce*

A2 way. A - way. A - way. A - way. Dis -

f *mf* *f* *p*

A3 way. A - way. A - way. Daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n. Daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n.

Piano accompaniment

92

mf marcato non dim. *mp dolce*

S1 sol - ving in - to daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n. Be - fore the west be - gi -

mf marcato non dim. *mp dolce*

S2 sol - ving in - to daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n. Be - fore the west be - gi -

mf marcato non dim. *mp dolce*

A1 sol - ving in - to daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n. Be - fore the west be - gi -

mf marcato non dim. *mp dolce*

A2 - ving to daw-n - n - n - aw - n - n - n. Be - fore the west be - gi -

A3

Piano accompaniment

S1 Be - fore me.

S.2

A1

A2

S1 *pp* Death *non dim.*

S.2 *pp* Death. *non dim.*

A1 *pp* *mp* Daw - n - n - aw - n. *pp* *non dim.* Daw - n.

A2 *p* *mp* Daw - n - n - aw - n. *pp* *non dim.* Daw - n.