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Light the Way: Song Cycle for Baritone Voice and Piano (Honors)

Brian Baxter
Illinois Wesleyan University

Joshua Ziemann
Illinois Wesleyan University

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LIGHT THE WAY

SONG CYCLE FOR BARITONE VOICE AND PIANO

MUSIC BY BRIAN BAXTER
TEXT BY JOSHUA ZIEMANN

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LIGHT THE WAY
SONG CYCLE FOR BARITONE VOICE AND PIANO
2005-2006

DURATION: APPROX. 15 MINUTES

MUSIC BY BRIAN BAXTER
TEXT BY JOSHUA ZIEMANN

COMPOSER’S NOTE: Light the Way is based on seven distinct poems written by Joshua Ziemann. I was compelled to write a song cycle based on Ziemann’s texts after reading through his poetry and seeing great possibilities for musical settings. The poems that I chose to set are not concretely related to one another; however they are related on an abstract level. The texts in many respects, represents a sense of searching for purpose and meaning in life and our environment. I chose the title, Light the Way, in order to reflect this sentiment.

Each song is relatively brief and written to be performed in the order they are presented here. Only To Martyr, Missile Life, Chaos Bush, and “(a riddle)” can be performed outside the context of the cycle. The entire cycle is based around 4 key centers; D, E, F, G#. The key centers for each song respectively adhere to the following pattern: D, F, E, G#, E, F, and D. The songs are arranged in the manner of a palindrome. The central song, a wolfpack thundered in and tore me lengthwise, features text that is arranged as a palindrome and the music in this song in many ways reflects this quality. The central 3 songs are also connected with no pause between them.

The opening 3 songs of the cycle begin with questions regarding the value of time and energy involved in following one’s passion. These songs lead to the central song; a wolfpack thundered in and tore me lengthwise, which in a way represents a very strong and life-altering experience. It depicts the violence of a metaphorical wolfpack destroying everything that the writer represents (or a literal wolfpack depending on your interpretation). The final 3 songs of the cycle represent a response to the first three songs due to the stunning experience with the wolfpack. Your could would represents hope for the future, Chaos Bush, simply admires the union of nature and the industry of man, and “(a riddle)” seeks to define what it is that lights the way for personal inspiration. One could take this poem as a literal riddle defining a lighthouse however in the context of this song cycle it represents the search for more in this life and beyond it. The lighthouse is the riddle that we as humans are striving to define and understand.

-BTB
TO MARTYR

Each unlit day I raise the pen
And hope grasps for the ledge again
For why, if man holds not my faith
Would I waste ink on offing’s wraith?
Because, truth told, my loss is dire;
But they’ve less hope and stakes are higher.

MISSILE LIFE

Most will sight the desert sand
Fewer strive for sky
All are thrust with even hand
Though some are loathe to fly

IF I PEELED EVERY BIRDIE, FLUNG

If I peeled every birdie, flung
them to the skies to watch –
their arc would be Uneducate
and Poetry would retch

A WOLFPACK THUNDERED IN AND TORE ME LENGTHWISE

a wolfpack thundered in and tore me lengthwise
venting my chest as it howled
over a quivering fist
I shot it and it quivered and holwed more
venting blood across my chest
as it howled and kept venting a
wolfpack thundered in and tore me lengthwise
YOUR COULD WOULDN'T

your could wouldn't
crush these indecencies
stir them in sparkle lime luster
and drink to a whole
new

your would
(if only a sweet brevity,
stir in grain your laughter
to

CHAOS BUSH

A tempestuous bough
in glorious
yoke Bloom
protruded split twigs
between rusty links
and then twisted them
into a fine handshake.

"RIDDLED"

Though scion am I of great trees
I sway not with a level breeze
Nor do I bud nor green or rise
A totem, bared; attentive guise
I plow the darkness, reigns in hand
of all your world; I light the land

-JZ
To Martyr

Music by Brian Baxter
(b. 1985)

Text by Joshua Ziemann
(b. 1986)

Mysterioso \( \text{c. 88} \)

Baritone

Piano

a tempo

--

*Harmonics: Diamond-shaped noteheads indicate that those keys should be depressed silently and no pedal should be used.

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Light the Way - page 5
Each unlit day I raise

the pen and hope grasps
for the ledge

again

and hope grasps

for the ledge again

\[ \text{Fast and Violent } \dot{f} = 144 \]

For why, for why, if man holds
not my faith

would I

waste ink on offering's wraith?
my loss
my loss
is dire

but they've less hope and stakes

are higher
they’ve less hope and stakes are

higher higher

Light the Way - page 11
Few - er strive

for sky

sub p

All are thrust

Light the Way - page 13
with even hand

Though some

are loathe

to fly
If I peeled every birdie, flung

Music by Brian Baxter (b. 1985)
Text by Joshua Ziemann (b. 1986)

Quickly \( \frac{d}{4} = 84 \)

If I peeled every birdie, flung

them to the skies to watch

Light the Way - page 15
their arc would be

Un-educated

Light the Way - page 16
a wolfpack thundered in and tore me lengthwise

Music by Brian Baxter
(b. 1985)

Text by Joshua Ziemann
(b. 1986)

Violently $J=120$

$J=90$

Light the Way - page 18
thundered

in and tore me lengthwise

venting my chest

as it howled
o-ver a qui-ver-ing

Tortured Reflection \( \text{j} = 60 \)

I shot it and it qui-vered and howled more

Slower \( \text{j} = 48 \)
44 Violently $\text{d} = 76$

46

\begin{align*}
    \text{venting blood across my chest}
\end{align*}

50

\begin{align*}
    \text{as it howled and kept venting a}
\end{align*}

Light the Way - page 21
wolf pack thun-dered in and tore me length

wise

rit.

Light the Way - page 22
stir in grain

your laughter and sparkle

a little smile to

Light the Way - page 26
Chaos Bush

Music by Brian Baxter
(b. 1985)

Text by Joshua Ziemann
(b. 1986)

Moderato \( \text{\textit{d} = 76} \)

a tempo \( \text{\textit{d} = 72} \)

A temp-est - u-ous bough in glor-i-ous yoke _ blooms yoke _
blooms protruded split twigs between rust-y links

and twist-ed them in to a fine hand shake fine hand shake

rit. Elevated (freely) $\text{j} = 76$

A tempestuous bough in glorious yoke blooms

simile

Light the Way - page 28
"(a riddle)"

Moderato con moto \( \downarrow = 72 \)

Music by Brian Baxter
(b. 1985)

Text by Joshua Ziemann
(b. 1986)

Light the Way - page 30
Trees sway

not with a level breeze

Nor do I bud nor green or rise
A totem bared, attentive

A totem bared, attentive

guise

I plow the darkness,
reigns in hand of all your

world

light the land

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