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

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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

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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 thundere in and tore me lengthwise
venting my chest as it howled
over a quivering fist
I shot it and it quivered and howled more
venting blood across my chest
as it howled and kept venting a
wolfpack thundere in and tore me lengthwise
YOUR COULD WOULD

your could would
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.

“(RIDDLE)”

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

Mysterioso \( \frac{d}{c.} \) 88

Baritone

Piano

(a tempo)

(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
Questioning  \( \text{\textit{J = 60}} \)

Each unlit day I raise

-- the pen and hope grasps

Light the Way - page 6
for the ledge again and hope grasps

for the ledge again

for why, for why, if man holds

Light the Way - page 7
not my faith
my faith

would I
would I

waste ink on offering's wraith?
my loss
ing 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
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 $\frac{4}{4}$

If I peeled every birdie, flung

them to the skies to watch

Light the Way - page 15
a wolfpack thundered in and tore me lengthwise

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

Violently $J = 120$

Light the Way - page 18
thundered

in and tore me lengthwise

venting my chest

as it howled

Light the Way - page 19
wolf pack thun-dered in and tore me length

wise

rit.

Light the Way - page 22
Chaos Bush

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

Moderato $d = 76$

A tempestuous bough in glorious yoke blooms yoke

Light the Way - page 27
blooms protruded split twigs between rusty links

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

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

A tempestuous bough in glorious yoke blooms

simile
A totem bared, attentive

guise

I plow the darkness,

Light the Way - page 32
Light the Way - page 33