



THE CROSSING

IN A HOUSE BESIEGED

CONDUCTOR Donald Nally

ORGAN Scott Dettra

THE CROSSING

Katy Avery, Nathaniel Barnett, Karen Blanchard, Steven Bradshaw, Danielle Buonaiuto, Colin Dill, Micah Dinger, Joanna Gates, Dimitri German, Dominic German, Steven Hyder, Anika Kildegaard, Chelsea Lyons, Maren Montalbano, Rebecca Myers, Daniel O’Dea, Daniel Schwartz, Rebecca Siler, Tiana Sorenson, Daniel Spratlan, Elisa Sutherland, Daniel Taylor, Jason Weisinger, Shari Wilson

ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR Kevin Vondrak

KEYBOARDS John Grecia

SOUND DESIGNER Paul Vazquez

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Jonathan Bradley

OPERATIONS MANAGER Shannon McMahon

DEVELOPMENT MANAGER Stephanie Lantz-Goldstein

GRANTS MANAGER Katie Feeney

ARTIST REPRESENTATION Alliance Artist Management

SUNDAY, **MARCH 27** @ 7 PM

Saint Mark’s Church

There will be an intermission.

PROGRAM

i. not so much watching as waiting

The Memory of Rain (2010) by Lansing D. McLoskey

ii. It seemed perfectly familiar to her

Salve Regina (2001) by Arvo Pärt

INTERMISSION

iii. holding her hands over her ears

In a House Besieged (2021) by Stacy Garrop (world premiere)

Prologue

I. A Natural Disaster

II. Almost No Memory

III. The Cottages: 2. Lillian

IV. Order

V. In a House Besieged

Epilogue

Commissioned by the Cleveland Museum of Art, Tom Welsh, Director of Performing Arts, Music and Film; with generous support of the Musart Society, in honor of Robert G. Schneider. Written for The Crossing, Donald Nally and Scott Dettra.

PROGRAM NOTES & TEXTS

The Memory of Rain

Music Lansing McLoskey

Words Philip Levine (1928-2015)

Commissioned by The Crossing, Donald Nally, conductor, with funding from The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage through the Philadelphia Music Project: premiered at The Month of Moderns 2010, The Crossing's annual summer festival of new music.

1.

Dawn. First light tearing
at the rough tongues of zinnias,
at the leaves of the just born.

Today it will rain. On the road
black cars are abandoned, but the clouds
ride above, their wisdom intact.

They are predictions. They never matter.
The jet fighters lift above the flat roofs,
black arrowheads trailing their future.

2.

When the night comes small fires go out.
Blood runs to the heart and finds it locked.

Morning is exhaustion, tranquilizers, gasoline,
the screaming of frozen bearings,
the failures of will, the TV talking to itself.

The clouds go on eating oil, cigars,
housewives, sighing letters,
the breath of lies. In their great silent pockets
they carry off all our dead.

3.

The clouds collect until there's no sky.
A boat slips its moorings and drifts
toward the open sea, turning and turning.

The moon bends to the canal and bathes
her torn lips, and the earth goes on
giving off her angers and sighs

and who knows or cares except these
breathing the first rains,
the last rivers running over iron.

4.

You cut an apple in two pieces
and ate them both. In the rain
the door knocked and you dreamed it.
On bad roads the poor walked under cardboard boxes.

The houses are angry because they're watched.
A soldier wants to talk with God
but his mouth fills with lost tags.

The clouds have seen it all, in the dark
they pass over the graves of the forgotten
and they don't cry or whisper.

They should be punished every morning,
they should be bitten and boiled like spoons.

– Philip Levine, "Clouds," from *Ashes*, 1979. Used with permission of the author.

Salve Regina

Music Arvo Pärt

Words from the Marian antiphon for Compline

*Salve, Regina, Mater misericordiæ,
vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve.
Ad te clamamus exsules filii Hevæ,
Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes
in hac lacrimarum valle.*

*Eia, ergo, advocata nostra, illos tuos
misericordes oculos ad nos converte;
Et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,
nobis post hoc exsilium ostende.
O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria.*

O, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy,
Hail our life, our sweetness and our hope.
To thee do we cry,
Poor banished children of Eve;
To thee do we send up our sighs,
Mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.

Turn then, most gracious advocate,
Thine eyes of mercy toward us;
And, after this, our exile,
Show us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
O merciful, O loving,
O sweet Virgin Mary.

In a House Besieged

Music Stacy Garrop

Words Lydia Davis

Commissioned by the Cleveland Museum of Art, Tom Welsh, Director of Performing Arts, Music and Film; with generous support of the Musart Society, in honor of Robert G. Schneider.

Written for The Crossing, Donald Nally and Scott Dettra.

In a House Besieged features several short stories by contemporary American writer Lydia Davis that reflect the fear and anxiety that accompany the aging process. We see our homes and the world around us crumble and decay with time; can we admit that our bodies and minds will do the same? If we are lucky enough to grow old, will we remember who we are? The piece presents five stories over the course of five movements, each highlighting various aspects of the aging process. Two additional fragments woven between these movements serve as a prologue, a series of interludes and an epilogue. One fragment consists of the sounds someone makes while trying to recall how to pronounce the word "woman." The other fragment, when fully heard at the end of the piece, illustrates the rising apprehension a person experiences with the onset and progression of dementia. – Stacy Garrop

Prologue

(from "Suddenly Afraid")

a wa wam

(from "The Busy Road")

I am so used to it

A Natural Disaster (from *The Collected Stories of Lydia Davis*)

In our home here by the rising sea we will not last much longer. The cold and the damp will certainly get us in the end, because it is no longer possible to leave; the cold has cracked open the only road away from here, the sea has risen and filled the cracks down by the marsh where it is low, has sunk and left salt crystals lining the crack, has risen again higher and made the road impassable.

The sea washes up through the pipes into our basins, and our drinking water is brackish. Mollusks have appeared in our front yard and our garden and we can't walk without crushing their shells at every step. At every high tide the sea covers our land, leaving pools when it ebbs, among our rosebushes and in the furrows of our rye field. Our seeds have been washed away; the crows have eaten what few were left.

Now we have moved into the upper rooms of the house and stand at the window watching the fish flash through the branches of our peach tree. An eel looks out from below our wheelbarrow.

Interlude

(from "Suddenly Afraid")

a wa wam owm

(from "The Busy Road")

I am so used to it by now

Almost No Memory (from *Almost no Memory*)

A certain woman had a very sharp consciousness but almost no memory. She remembered enough to get by from day to day.

Sometimes she would only read and think, and sometimes she would make a note in her current notebook of what she was reading in a notebook from an earlier time, or she would make a note of an idea that came to her from what she was reading. (...)

Although most of what she read was new to her, sometimes she immediately recognized what she read and had no doubt that she herself had written it, and thought it. It seemed perfectly familiar to her, as though she had just thought it that very day, though in fact she had not thought it for some years, unless reading it again was the same as thinking it again, or the same as thinking it for the first time, and though she might never have thought it again, if she had not happened to read it in her notebook. And so she knew by this that these notebooks truly had a great deal to do with her.

Interlude

(from "Suddenly Afraid")

a wa wam owm
Owamn womn

(from "The Busy Road")

I am so used to it by now
That when the traffic falls silent,

The Cottages: 2. Lillian (from *The Collected Stories of Lydia Davis*)

I look out from time to time and she is still sitting there alone, and she will not call them for fear of being a nuisance, and because she is disappointed she begins to think as she has thought before that she is too far away, she will not come back to this cottage again though she has come here for so many years, first with her husband, then without her husband, who died between one summer and the next, and she is thinking too how she makes trouble for everyone; well, no one minds! I have told her, but she will never believe that any more than she will uncover her old body to swim in company with the other old people here, and goes down to the lake alone at dawn; and now she puts away her book and her glasses and her shoes untied by the bed, and goes to bed, for it is evening, and she likes to lie and watch the darkness come down into the woods, though tonight, as sometimes before, she does not really watch, or though her eyes rest on the darkening woods, she is not so much watching as waiting, and often, now, feels she is waiting.

Interlude

(from "Suddenly Afraid")

a wa wam owm
Owamn womn

(from "The Busy Road")

I am so used to it by now
That when the traffic falls silent,

Order (from *Varieties of Disturbance*)

All day long the old woman struggles with her house and the objects in it; the doors will not shut; the floorboards separate and the clay squeezes up between them; the plaster walls dampen with rain; bats fly down from the attic and invade her wardrobe; mice make nests in her shoes; her fragile dresses fall into tatters from their own weight on the hanger; she finds dead insects everywhere. In desperation she exhausts herself sweeping, dusting, mending, caulking, gluing, and at night sinks into bed holding her hands over her ears so as not to hear the house continue to subside into ruin around her.

Interlude

Suddenly Afraid (from *Varieties of Disturbance*)

because she couldn't write the name of what she was: a wa wam owm
Owamn womn

In a House Besieged (from *Break it Down*)

In a house besieged lived a man and woman. From where they cowered in the kitchen the man and woman heard small explosions. "The wind," said the woman. "Hunters," said the man. "The rain," said the woman. "The army," said the man. The woman wanted to go home but she was already home, there in the middle of the country in a house besieged.

Epilogue

The Busy Road (from *The Collected Stories of Lydia Davis*)

I am so used to it by now
That when the traffic falls silent,
I think a storm is coming.

– *In a House Besieged* is based on stories by Lydia Davis, which were originally published in her story collections, *BREAK IT DOWN*, *ALMOST NO MEMORY* and *VARIETIES OF DISTURBANCE*, published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

The Crossing is a Grammy® Award-winning professional chamber choir conducted by Donald Nally and dedicated to new music. It is committed to working with creative teams to make and record new, substantial works for choir that explore and expand ways of writing for choir, singing in choir and listening to music for choir. Many of its nearly 125 commissioned premieres address social, environmental and political issues.

The Crossing collaborates with some of the world's most accomplished ensembles and artists, including the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, American Composers Orchestra, Lyric Fest, Piffaro, Beth Morrison Projects, Allora & Calzadilla, Bang on a Can, Klockriketeatern and the International Contemporary Ensemble. Similarly, The Crossing often collaborates with some of the world's most prestigious venues and presenters, such as the Park Avenue Armory, Penn Live Arts at the University of Pennsylvania, National Sawdust, David Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center, Disney Hall in Los Angeles, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Menil Collection in Houston, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, Haarlem Choral Biennale in The Netherlands, The Finnish National Opera in Helsinki, The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., Philadelphia Museum of Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall, Symphony Space in New York, Winter Garden with WNYC and Duke, Northwestern, Colgate and Notre Dame Universities. The Crossing holds an annual residency at the Warren Miller Performing Arts Center in Big Sky, Montana.

With a commitment to recording its commissions, The Crossing has released 25 albums, receiving two Grammy® Awards for Best Choral Performance (2018, 2019) and seven Grammy® nominations. The Crossing, with Donald Nally, was the American Composers Forum's 2017 Champion of New Music. They were the recipients of the 2015 Margaret Hillis Award for Choral Excellence, three ASCAP Awards for Adventurous Programming and the Dale Warland Singers Commission Award from Chorus America.

Recently, The Crossing has expanded its choral presentation to film, working with Four/Ten Media, in-house sound designer Paul Vazquez of Digital Mission Audio Services, visual artists Brett Snodgrass, Eric Southern and Steven Bradshaw, and composers David Lang, Paul Fowler and Michael Gordon on live and animated versions of new and existing works. Lang's *protect yourself from infection* and *in nature* were specifically designed to be performed within the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, during which The Crossing premiered a number of newly commissioned works for outdoors by Matana Roberts, Wang Lu and Ayanna Woods. crossingchoir.org

Donald Nally (Conductor)

Nally conducts The Crossing, the internationally acclaimed, Grammy® Award-winning professional choir that commissions, premieres and records only new music. He holds the John W. Beattie Chair of Music at Northwestern University where he is professor and director of choral organizations. Nally has served as chorus master at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Welsh National Opera, Opera Philadelphia and, for many seasons, at the Spoleto Festival in Italy. Nally has commissioned over 140 works. He received the 2017 Michael Korn Founders Award from Chorus America, and his ensembles have twice received the Margaret Hillis Award for Excellence in Choral Music. Nally has worked closely with the artists Allora & Calzadilla and composer David Lang on projects in London, Osaka, Cleveland, Edmonton, Cordoba and Philadelphia. Recent highlights include his role as visiting resident artist at the Park Avenue Armory, music director for the world premiere of Lang's the mile-long opera, directing 1000 voices on the High Line in Manhattan, chorus master for the New York Philharmonic for world premieres by Lang and Julia Wolfe, and guest conducting works he has commissioned with the Swedish Radio Choir.

Scott Dettra (Organ)

Praised as a "brilliant organist" (*Dallas Morning News*) and an "outstanding musician" (*The Diapason*) and called a "prodigy" by *The New York Times* at age 13, Scott Dettra is acclaimed as one of America's leading concert organists. Dettra's playing is hailed for its clarity, rhythmic intensity and musical elegance, and has been described by *The American Organist* as "music making of absolute authority and sophisticated expression." He combines an active performance schedule with his post as Director of Music at the Church of the Incarnation in Dallas, where he leads a vibrant music ministry in one of the country's largest Episcopal parishes. In addition to his work at Incarnation, he is a member of the organ faculty at Southern Methodist University and is organist of The Crossing, the Grammy® Award-winning professional chamber choir based in Philadelphia. Prior to his appointment in Dallas, he was organist of Washington National Cathedral.