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DOMINICK ARGENTO: JONAH AND THE WHALE

DOMINICK ARGENTO b. 1927

JONAH AND THE WHALE

THOMAS OAKES narrator

DANIEL NORMAN tenor (Jonah)

DANIEL COLE bass (Voice of God)

PROVIDENCE SINGERS

BOSTON MODERN ORCHESTRA PROJECT

ANDREW CLARK, CONDUCTOR

PART I

- [1] **I. The Lesson** (Chorale) 2:08
- [2] **II. The Charge to Jonah** (Arietta and Cavatina) 3:50
- [3] **III. His Flight** (Worksongs and Sea Shanty) 4:06
- [4] **IV. The Storm at Sea**
(Variations on a Sea Shanty) 4:46
- [5] **V. In the Belly of the Whale** (Intermezzo) 4:26
- [6] **VI. His Prayer** (Aria with Chorus) 9:06

PART II

- [7] **VII. In Nineveh** (Ostinato and Kyrie) 8:24
Amanda Forsythe, soprano
Joshua Krugman, baritone
- [8] **VIII. Jonah's Despair** (Cadenza) 3:51
- [9] **IX. The Booth** (Nocturne and Aubade) 5:18
- [10] **X. God's Rebuke** (Fugal Aria and Hymn) 4:23
- [11] **XI. The Lesson Restated** (Chorale and Coda) 3:17

TOTAL 53:37



JONAH CAST FORTH BY THE WHALE. GUSTAVE DORE (D. 1863)

By Dominick Argento

On the vaulted ceiling of the church of Härkeberga in Sweden is a painting by Albertus Pictor showing Jonah being thrown into the sea by sailors to calm the storm that threatens to overwhelm their small boat. Jonah's hands are piously clasped in prayer as he is about to tumble into the jaws of a great fish. A few feet away from him—and simultaneously, it would appear—a completely naked Jonah, hands still clasped in prayer, is being vomited up onto dry land after the three days spent in the belly of the whale, during which time not only his clothes but also his hair and beard have been digested.

What I find so endearing and winning in that painting is the nonchalant mixture of realism (the digestive detail, for example), naïveté (the mythological whale, drawn purely from the artist's imagination), symbolism (the trefoil patterns scattered in the background), and the blithe disregard for time and space (the two Jonahs and two whales, the dry land only inches away from the storm-tossed vessel). This blending of simplicity and sophistication produces, for me, a delightful dynamic. I have tried in my composition to capture some of the spirit of Albertus Pictor's painting, bringing together disparate elements, idioms, and techniques. The basic poem, *Patience, or Jonah and the Whale* from Medieval English of the 14th Century, is interspersed with texts drawn from the Vulgate Psalms (4th Century), a Protestant hymnal (17th Century), traditional work songs and sea shanties (19th Century), the King James Bible, and several other sources. This frequently creates intentional anachronisms: when the Old Testament King of Nineveh orders his subjects to "pray with all our might," they comply with a *Kyrie eleison*; Jonah, sailing to a biblical port, breaks out in a New England whaling song.

The music, too, is a combination of various idioms and techniques. The tune of the whaling song is authentic, although harmonized in a circle of fifths, while the other worksongs were “invented.” The Protestant hymn is borrowed intact but the *Kyrie* and *De profundis* are original; most of Jonah’s music is derived from a 12-tone row, featuring diminished triads (having imperfect fifths) while most of God’s music is tonally anchored in major and minor triads (having perfect fifths).

And like the ceiling of that Swedish church, the background of the composition is studied with trefoil patterns. As noted above, the music of Jonah and God utilizes three kinds of triads: the orchestra itself is a trio of trios—three trombones, three percussionists, and three extended-range instruments (piano, organ, harp); the whale’s music is in $\frac{9}{8}$ (3+3+3); and at the work’s conclusion it combines—in the key of three flats—with the hymn, “Praise to the Lord,” which is in $\frac{3}{4}$ meter and uses the unorthodox phrase length of six rather than four measures.

Even the casual listener will notice that the whale gets the best tune in the work. And this is as it should be since I consider the whale, not Jonah, to be the hero of the piece—a point, I hope, that the narrator’s concluding lines, as well as the music, will make clear.

JONAH AND THE WHALE was commissioned by the Plymouth Congregational Church and the Cathedral Church of St. Mark (Minneapolis, MN) for the choral organization now known as VocalEssence. *Jonah and the Whale* was completed in 1973 and received its first performance that same year under the direction of Philip Brunelle, founder of VocalEssence. The work is scored for narrator, tenor, bass, mixed chorus, three trombones, three percussion, piano, harp, and organ.

By Michael McGaghie

In April 1975, Dominick Argento received the Pulitzer Prize in Music for his song cycle, *From the Diary of Virginia Woolf*. A bevy of news crews appeared at his Minneapolis home on the very day of the announcement. Argento recalls the “unimaginative videographers” in his 2004 monograph *Catalogue Raisonné as Memoir*, journalists who “insisted on filming me seated at the piano, pencil in hand, focusing on a sheet of music manuscript, pretending to be composing.” He likened the contrived pose to “a safari-suited, pith-helmeted hunter, cradling a rifle in his arms, with one foot resting on an elephant’s carcass.” Both the substance and the style of this response cut directly to Argento’s identity as a composer. Contrary to this cliché image, Argento’s music is not born in the studio, at his desk, or at the piano. His ideas germinate in the library. The works reveal his deep musicianship, yes—but they also reveal his literacy.

Dominick Argento loves to read. Before he began piano lessons as a boy, he had already taught himself music theory at the local public library. This habit, nurtured throughout his life, has deeply influenced his work. Today, his correspondence, conversation, and many writings display an impressive vocabulary. He frequently quotes poetry and references

literature in public speeches. Language, text, books—these things are sacred to Argento, who evidently wishes to be remembered as both musician and *literatus*.

It makes sense, then, that songs, operas, and choral works dominate Argento's catalog. Text selection occupies most of his efforts while composing, he claims, far more than the activity of setting notes to paper. He scours libraries for texts that pique his interest, edits them to a suitable length, and only then composes the music. His chosen texts almost mirror a survey course in Western literature. Catullus. Dante. Shakespeare. Longfellow. Thoreau. Melville. The list continues.

Argento favors texts that examine people. A topos of self-discovery threads through his music, probing at the joys, fears, faith, and despondency of our shared human condition. It is notable that Argento opens his own memoir with an excerpt of Petrarch's *Letter to Posterity*. Petrarch, the famed 14th-century Italian poet and philosopher, has come to be known as the "Father of Humanism." Argento would not have made this choice casually. By quoting this particular figure, Argento implicitly confirms his inclination towards humanism.

This interest may explain another facet of Argento's practice. "I like to play with macaronic things," he writes. The term 'macaronic' refers to a mixture (usually of languages), where elements of two or more become introduced into another. By coupling seemingly different things, a designer draws attention to both their similarities and disagreements. Elements of each are thrown into relief by the juxtaposition. The combination may project a new understanding or meaning—one not found in any single element but created by the designer via the reflections of one component onto another.

A macaronic method has become Argento's trademark. His operas, songs, oratorios, and shorter choral works delight in juxtaposing different musical idioms, textual themes, languages, tempos, and the like. Rather than shunning received musical tradition (as did many of his contemporaries), Argento unabashedly embraces it. "The whole world of

music is my oyster," he exclaims, citing *The Magic Flute* as his favorite opera: "Into it, Mozart emptied a grab bag of just about every idiom that he knew: opera buffa, opera seria, coloratura showpieces, a chorale prelude, a march, quasi folk songs, solemn religious choruses, a fugal overture, and even an instrumental novelty—the glockenspiel. Without the need to invent anything new, Mozart's genius creates the most eclectic musical work I know, yet how perfectly it serves the libretto's humanity and universality." Argento's own opera *Postcard from Morocco* (1971) is similarly macaronic and clearly takes *The Magic Flute* as a model. Argento has since identified *Postcard* as a turning point in his development, the first work in which he was able to craft his own voice by borrowing, adapting, and recombining elements from earlier musical traditions.

Jonah and the Whale followed two years later. One might consider it the first choral work of Argento's fully mature style, as well as his first full-length oratorio for chorus and orchestra. Argento assembled a grand macaronic collection for *Jonah's* texts, including short passages from the King James and Vulgate Bibles, the Tridentine Mass, and traditional songs and hymns.

Most of the narrative sections of *Jonah* are read aloud by a speaker. Rather than quoting Scripture *verbatim* for this backbone of the libretto, Argento opted for an alternate telling of the Jonah story. That source is *Patience, or Jonah and the Whale*, a lengthy 14th-century Middle English homiletic poem by an unknown author. *Patience* paraphrases the full tale from Scripture (even demarcating the same chapter divisions) while also elaborating greatly upon the original story. The rich characterizations and detailed narrative must have appealed greatly to Argento, who opted to translate the entire poem into modern English by himself. This marked the first instance where Argento incorporated his own language into a libretto, and the success of *Jonah* gave him confidence to do so again in later works. Again borrowing themes from previously established works, Argento later wrote his own texts for the monodrama *A Water Bird Talk* (based on Anton

Chekhov), the opera *The Aspern Papers* (Henry James), and the oratorio *Evensong: Of Love and Angels* (Thornton Wilder).

In working on *Jonah's* narrative, Argento did not limit himself to the mere translation of *Patience*. Argento actually omitted much of the original poetry and reordered several lines of the remaining text. The resulting amalgam heightens the poet's already strong characterizations. Jonah's petulance, God's forbearance, and the Whale's obedience are all emphasized through Argento's careful editing. The other texts (often sung atop the narrator's amplified voice) provide scenic color or detached commentary throughout the work.

Though Argento's score divides the eleven-movement work into two formal parts, the music sounds continuously. This lends the work a strong cinematic flavor—scenes move quickly from one into another, borrowings and other motifs appear and re-appear as though in flashes of memory. The opening "Lesson" summarizes the moral of *Patience* in a swarthy blend of chorale style and Argento's own idiosyncratic twelve-tone practice [1]. The following "Charge to Jonah" parallels the libretto via its contrasting musical characterizations of God and Jonah [2]. God's music is stable, exhibiting triadic harmonies and a fixed tempo. Jonah's response veers the other way, embracing diminished fifths and repeatedly fluctuating speeds. The "Flight" and "Storm" movements introduce multiple anachronistic borrowings, swelling to a frightful climax as Jonah is tossed into the sea [3, 4]. While the narrator recounts Jonah's time "In the Belly of the Whale," three trombones play a lengthy cetacean theme—noble, cantabile, and even somewhat giddy [5]. Part I ends with Jonah's "Prayer" [6]. Here, Argento dispenses with *Patience* in favor of the well-known text from the King James Version ("I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord") as the chorus sings a mostly unaccompanied setting of Psalm 130 (*De profundis*). As Jonah finds his peace with God, the music resolves to an A major chord, the first real cadential resting-point of the piece.

Part II launches immediately into Jonah's condemnation "In Nineveh," the most operatic section of the work [7]. An ostinato figure pulses incessantly as Jonah skulks through the city. Other characters join in turn: the narrator, the terrified King of Nineveh, the citizens. Though *Patience* contains Jonah's admonition "God's vengeance shall verily void this place!" but once, Argento cycles through the prophecy nine times while the tension builds. The chorus eventually bursts out into a climactic *Kyrie eleison* (marked by Argento as *con urgenza*) as the ostinato continues. The effect is one of accumulating fear and disorientation, relieved at the last by God's decision to spare the repentant Nineveh. The *Kyrie* (an original setting) dates from several years earlier. It was composed by a younger Argento as part of a Requiem Mass for his father—a project he never completed.

"Jonah's Despair" depicts his confusion at full boil, a vocal tour-de-force [8]. After he collapses into sleep, the chorus luxuriously describes the woodbine sent by God to Jonah in "The Booth" [9]. Jonah's subsequent ingratitude becomes the subject of "God's Rebuke" [10]. The chorus emerges singing the familiar hymn "Praise to the Lord" as God professes his own forbearance. The final movement recapitulates the original "Lesson," set atop God's triadic music from Part I [11]. "Praise to the Lord" then returns accompanied by the whale's theme, marvelously juxtaposing musics of praise and obedience.

Argento closes the work with a simple cadence in E-flat major. Simultaneously, Jonah repeats his closing line from Part I ("Salvation is of the Lord") though now, the title character appears less convinced than before—for as Jonah sings his last, he and the glockenspiel sound an F–B tritone over the chorus's E-flat major chord. This dissonant interval (the same that Argento links with Jonah's imperfection) rings out unresolved as the chorus dies away.

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JONAH AND THE WHALE, ABRAHAM VAN LINSE, 1829-31, LINCOLN COLLEGE CHAPEL, OXFORD, ENGLAND. PHOTO: BR. LAWRENCE LEVY, O.P.

PART I

[1] I. The Lesson (Chorale)

CHORUS

Patience is a princely thing, though displeasing often.
When heavy hearts are hurt, or held up to scorn,
Sufferance may assuage and salve the blazing pain:
Face woe with fortitude, and joy will follow.

NARRATOR

It befell long ago in the land of Judah,
Wherein Jonah was enjoined to be prophet to the Gentiles;
God's charge to him came, creating no cheer
With these harsh words rankling and roaring in his ear:

[2] II. The Charge to Jonah (Arietta and Cavatina)

VOICE OF GOD

Arise at once and quickly set forth;
Without a further word, take the Nineveh highway,
And spread through that city these words which I now say:
I have watched too long all the wickedness of its dwellers,
Their maliciousness is so mad I shall abide it no more.
Now hasten there swiftly and give them this message.

NARRATOR

When that voice which had stunned his mind ceased speaking,
Jonah's wit was withered and warily he thought:

Texts drawn from *Patience, or Jonah and the Whale* (anonymous Medieval English, ca. 1360) translated by the composer; The Book of Jonah, II: 2-9; Psalm CXXX; Sea Shanty: "The Greenland Fishery, or The Whale" and traditional worksongs (19th Century); and "Praise To the Lord" (Protestant Hymnal, 17th Century).

JONAH

If I bow to his bidding and bring them this tale,
And they take me, my troubles will triple in Nineveh.
If I speak of such tidings, they will seize me at once,
Put me in prison, pin me in the stocks,
Set me in shackles, and scratch out my eyes.
A marvelous message for a man to preach!
In spite of the perils, I shall approach it no closer;
I shall turn my travels toward Tarshish and tarry a while,
And thus lost, I might perchance be left alone by him.

NARRATOR

So he passes to the port to secure a safe passage,
And finds there a fair ship fitted for its journey.
He seeks out the sailors and they settle on a sum
For taking him to Tarshish on the following tide.

[3] **III. His Flight** (Worksongs and Sea Shanty)

NARRATOR

He steps lively aboard as the sailors start singing:
They catch up the cross-sail and fasten the cables,
Working at the windlass they weigh their anchors,
And smartly secure the bowline to the mast.

They grip the guide-ropes and the great mainsail drops,
Then they lay in oars on the larboard side.

A blithe breeze behind them bellies out the sails
And spansk this sweet ship swiftly from the harbour.

CHORUS (*as sailors in four worksongs*)

Haul away, hand o'er hand,
Haul away, strongly haul!

Haul on the bowline, the ship she is
arolling,
O, haul on the bowline, the bowline,
haul-o!

Together, pull on the rope, lads.
Don't give up hope, lads,
With all your might,
Pull together!

Never was so joyful a Jew as was Jonah,
To have escaped so easily from the errand of God;
Believing that he who had established the earth
Was helpless to harm him on the high seas.

JONAH (*singing a sea shanty*)

The lookout in the crosstrees stood,
With his spyglass in his hand,
"There's a whale, there's a whale,
There's a whalefish," he cried,
"And she blows at every span, brave boys."

Then the captain stood on the quarter-deck,
And a fine little man was he,
"Overhaul! Overhaul! Let your davit-tackles fall,
And launch your boats for sea, brave boys."

"To lose a whale," our captain said,
"It grieves my heart full sore;
But oh! To lose four gallant men,
It grieves me ten times more, brave boys."

NARRATOR

But our Lord looks on all things, on land or afloat.
For the Master of Mankind, wise in all matters,
Ever wakeful and waiting, works at will.

Heave away, my bully boys,
Heave, heave away, I say.
That's how a drunken sailor
Earns his pay!

Haul away, (*etc.*)
Haul on the Bowline (*etc.*)
Together, pull (*etc.*)
Heave away, (*etc.*)

CHORUS

"And she blows at every span."

CHORUS

"And launch your boats for sea."

We struck that whale, the line paid out,
But she gave a flourish with her tail;
The boat capsized and four sailors they
were drowned,
And we never caught that whale, brave
boys,
And we never caught that whale.

"It grieves me ten times more, brave
boys, brave boys."

[4] **IV. The Storm at Sea** (Variations on a Sea Shanty)

NARRATOR

He evoked the elements he himself had endowed,
And winds quickly wakened when wrathfully he called:

THE VOICE OF GOD

Eurus and Aquilon, in the East residing,
Blow both at my bidding on these blue waters!

NARRATOR

Ragged clouds rose up, reddening the skies,
The sea souged most sorely, stunning the ear.
Winds on the dark waters wrestled together,
Making waves rage wildly, whelming so high
That the frightened fish darted and fled in terror.
The gale grew in fury and smashed all the gear,
Then hurled in a heap the helm and the stern;
Ripped ropes from the riggings and rent the sails.
Still the crew cut the cables, bailed quick as they could,
Intent on escaping, they scooped out the sea;
For be man's voyage ne'er so vile, his life is ever sweet.

They laboured to lighten the load of the ship,
Throwing overboard ballast and bales of cargo,
Then bags and featherbeds, bright gowns and robes,
Their casks and chests, and their coffers as well.
But the wailing of the wind went on wilder than ever,
And even more whelming were the waves on that sea.
There remained no remedy; they resigned all hope,
And each craved to the god who could comfort him best.
Then the wisest spoke out, despair in his voice:

A SOLO VOICE

I believe some lawless wretch may be on board,

Who has grieved his god or greatly angered him.
See, for his sins we shall sink, we shall perish for his sake.
I suggest we settle lots on every soul;
And let the loser be lobbed into the sea.

NARRATOR

To this they agreed and assembled at once,
Arranging among them that all should draw lots;
The injurious journeyer was judged to be Jonah.

CHORUS (*muttering*)

What the devil have you done, doltish wretch?
What do you seek on the sea, sinful shrew?
Would you destroy us all with your wicked works?
What country do you come from, do you call your own?

NARRATOR

He showed them by signs, which they well understood,
That he had fled from the face of our Father the Lord.
Then fear fell upon them, freezing their hearts:

CHORUS (*muttering*)

Have you no governor, guardian, or god to call upon?
Where in the world were you wanting to go?
See, how your sins have sealed your fate!
Give glory to your god before you go further!

NARRATOR

Roughly they took him by top and by toe,
And into the tumultuous sea he was thrown.
No sooner was he tossed out than the tempest abated,
The waves subsided and the waters grew still.

[5] **V. In the Belly of the Whale** (Intermezzo)

NARRATOR

A wild wallowing whale, by God's own will
Beaten up from the abyss, by that boat was floating.
Well aware of the man awash in the waters,
The whale swam swiftly to swallow him up;
Touching nary a tooth, Jonah tumbled down its throat.
With a mighty surge the fish swept to the bottom of the sea,
Where rough rocks rolled in the raging currents,
With the man in its maw much tortured by dread;
Little wonder it was that he wept in woe!
The whale, ever rolling, roamed the watery wilderness;
Seated in its stomach, safe and secure, Jonah pondered this lesson:

CHORUS

Sufferance may assuage and salve the blazing pain:
Face woe with fortitude, and joy will follow.

NARRATOR

So in the belly of that beast he abided in full,
Three days and three nights, ever thinking on the Lord;
He, who in happiness had hidden from his God,
Now, in sorrow and suffering, sought him.
At last, stillness descended and in the silence he prayed:

[6] **VI. His Prayer** (Aria with Chorus)

JONAH

I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord,
And he heard me;
Out of the belly of Hell cried I
And thou heardest my voice.

CHORUS

De profundis clamavi ad te,

For thou hadst cast me into the deep,
In the midst of the seas;
And the floods compassed me about.
All thy billows and thy waves passed over me.

Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight;
Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.

The waters compassed me about, even to the soul:
The depth closed me round about,
The waters compassed me about,
The weeds were wrapped about my head.

De profundis clamavi ad te,

Ad te clamavi, Domine:

*De profundis clamavi ad te,
Domine, Domine.*

De profundis clamavi ad te
[Out of the depths have I cried to you,]
Domine: exaudi vocem meam.
[O Lord: Hear my voice.]
Fiant aures tuae intendentes
[Let thine ears be attentive]
In vocem deprecationes meae.
[To the voice of my supplications.]
Si iniquitatis observaveris,
[If thou shouldst mark iniquities,]
Domine, quis sustinebit?
[O Lord, who shall stand?]
Quia apud te propitiatio est:
[But there is forgiveness with thee:]
et propter legem tuam sustinui
[That thou mayest be feared,]
te Domine.
[O Lord.]

I went down to the bottom of the mountains;
The earth with her boughs was about me forever.
Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption,
O Lord my God.

When my soul fainted within me,
I remembered the Lord,
And my prayer came in unto thee,
Into thine holy temple.
They that observe lying vanities forsake their own
mercy.

But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of
thanksgiving.

I will pay that that I have vowed.
Salvation is of the Lord.

They that observe lying vanities forsake their own
mercy.

But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of
thanksgiving.

I will pay that that I have vowed.
Salvation is of the Lord.

Amen.

Sustinuit anima mea in verbo eius:

[My soul waiteth for the Lord:]

speravit anima mea in Domino.

[And in his word do I hope.]

A custodia matutina usque ad noctem,

[My soul waiteth for the Lord more than
they that watch for the morning,]

Speret Israel in Domino.

[Let Israel hope in the Lord.]

Quia apud Dominum misericordia;

[For with the Lord there is mercy:]

et copiosa apud eum redemptio.

[And with him is plenteous redemption.]

Et ipse redimet Israel

[And he shall redeem Israel]

ex omnibus iniquitatibus eius

[From all his iniquities]

Gloria Patri et Filio

[Glory be to the Father and to the Son]

et Spiritui Sancto, sicut erat

[And to the Holy Spirit, as it was]

in principio, et nunc, et semper

[In the beginning, is now, and forever]

et in saecula saeculorum.

[And in ages of ages.]

Amen.

NARRATOR

Then our Father firmly commanded the fish
To spit up the sinner on some dry shore.
Jonah looked at the land that lay there before him:
It was the very same spot where his journey had
started.
Once again the wind of God's word whirled about
him:

THE VOICE OF GOD

Will you never go to Nineveh, not by any means?

JONAH

Yes, I shall go, Lord: grant me your grace.

PART II

[7] VII. In Nineveh (Ostinato and Kyrie)

NARRATOR

Then quick as he could, Jonah complied,
And when night arrived he was very near Nineveh.
The city itself was so wondrously wide
That it took three days to traverse the town.
On that first whole day, Jonah hurried ahead,
Not a word did he speak as he went on his way.
Then he cried out clearly, so that all might catch
The true tenor of his theme, and he told them this:

JONAH

Yet forty days in full shall fare to an ending,
Then shall Nineveh be punished and its pleasures all destroyed;
This town must truly be tumbled to the ground.
God's vengeance shall verily void this place!
Upside down you shall be plunged into the painful pit,
To be swallowed up swiftly by the swarthy earth;
For all who dwell here, by God's decree, are doomed to death.
God's vengeance shall verily void this place!

NARRATOR

This speech was cited and spread all about
To the burghers and bachelors that lived in the borough;
Such fear overcame them some fainted forthwith,
Their countenances clouded by the chill in their hearts.
Still Jonah never ceased, always saying the same:

JONAH

God's vengeance shall verily void this place!

NARRATOR

He kept crying out till the king himself heard,
Who then rashly arose and rushed from his throne
To a high heap of ashes wherein he could hide.
There dazed in the dust, with many tears dropping,
He wailed and he wept for his wicked deeds.
Then he said to his sergeant:

THE KING

Announce this news, in the name of the king:
Both men and beasts, women, babes and children,
Every prince, every priest, and prelates alike,
Must fast—freely and willingly fast for their offence.
Meekened and mortified, we will pray with all our might;
From our mouths the cries must mount to the Fountain of Mercy.
He will forgive us our guilt if we greet him as our God.

CHORUS (*as people of Nineveh*)

Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison.
Christe eleison, Christe eleison, Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison.

NARRATOR

And God through his goodness forgave them, as the king had said.
For in spite of his vow, the Lord withheld his vengeance.

[8] VIII. Jonah's Despair (Cadenza)

NARRATOR

Much anguish then seethed in the soul of Jonah;
He waxed like a whirlwind his wrath towards our Lord.
Such anger took hold of his heart that he hurled out
A painful prayer to the High Prince, like this:

JONAH

Now, Lord, take my life, for it lasts too long;
Since it seems to me sweeter to die at once
Than to play the prophet and be found a fool.
Cut short all my suffering; send a swift death.

THE VOICE OF GOD

Haughty man, have I harmed you here
By any deed I have done, or fate I have decreed you?

NARRATOR

Then joyless Jonah begins one more journey.
Grumbling, he goes to gain the high ground
At the eastern edge of that evil city,
There to watch and wait for what might happen next.
He there built a booth, the best he could build
Out of hay and fern and a few flowering herbs,
For that spot possessed not a single grove
To shield him from the sun or cast any shade.

[9] **IX. The Booth** (Nocturne and Aubade)

NARRATOR

And at last he lay down and slept deeply till dawn.

CHORUS

And while he slept, God made grow from the ground
A beautiful woodbine which bloomed over Jonah.
At dawning of day, as the Lord decreed,
The sleeper, still with eyes closed, sensed the fragrant vine;
Then gazed up in amazement at the shimmering leaves
Being blown by a breeze so cool and so mild.
As he looked all about him, he laughed and he laughed.
"Indeed, such a dwelling I never dreamed to possess."
Then God through his grace made the vine grow more beautiful;
So fine a bower of bliss no fellow had before.

So beautiful.

And when that night neared, how he needed to sleep!
Sweetly into slumber he slipped beneath those green and gracious leaves.

NARRATOR

But meanwhile, by God's will, a worm gnawed the roots,
And when Jonah awoke the woodbine was withered.
All shriveled and sere were those splendid leaves.
Fierce heat, as from a furnace, fell upon Jonah,
Now that nothing could shield him from the searing sun:
His vine had vanished and in vain he wept.
Once again, in anger, he turned against God:

JONAH

Ah, Maker of Man, what mastery be this,
To raise me so high, then fling me down to the depths?
Why me?
Why must your mischief always fall on me?

[10] **X. God's Rebuke** (Fugal Aria and Hymn)

THE VOICE OF GOD

Should you become so choleric, all because of a woodbine.
That you never tended for even one hour?
Such a sulky servant, and for something so slight!
It sprang up at one stroke and vanished at the next,
Yet it festers in you so fiercely, you would forfeit your life.
Such a sulky servant, and for something so slight!
And you would find fault with me then, when Nineveh I set free?
Should I not heed the prayers of supplicants who renounce their sins?
I myself made them all, out of primal matter;
I have watched over them from the start, as I shall watch until the end of the world.
Should I lose the labor of so long a task,
Overthrow that city when its sins are atoned for?
The sorrows of so sweet a place would surely pierce my heart.

So many sinful souls are now suffering therein,
And among that number are some mad or simpleton.
Even babes at the breast, utterly blameless,
And witless women who could not distinguish their
One hand from the other, for all this high world.
Besides, the borough abounds in dumb beasts,
Incapable of man's mischief, therefore innocent.
What purpose have I to punish the true penitents
Who come to proclaim me king, my mercy their
defense?

Were I as hasty as you here, harm would follow;
Were I as impetuous as my prophet, man would not
prosper.
Had compassion not averted my vengeance, verily I
could not be called merciful.

Be not angry, my good Jonah, and go now in peace.
Be patient and prudent in pain as well as joy;
For he who is so choleric that he rips his own clothes
Must then sullenly suffer
To sew them together himself.

CHORUS
Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy way
and defend thee.

Surely his goodness and mercy shall ever
attend thee.

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of
creation.
Ponder anew what the Almighty can do, who
with his love doth befriend thee.

[11] **XI. The Lesson Restated** (Chorale and Coda)

NARRATOR
Far faring afloat on swirls of pure waters,
A great fish frolicked, filled with heavenly grace.
For unlike the petulant prophet who faltered,
The whale never wavered—God's will it obeyed.

So should we all, if we wish to be wise,
Tread patiently the path appointed by God.

JONAH
Salvation is of the Lord.

Amen.

CHORUS
Patience is a princely thing,
Though displeasing often,
When heavy hearts are hurt,
Or held up to scorn,
Face woe with fortitude, and joy will follow.

Praise to the Lord!
O let all that is in me adore him!
All that hath breath
Join with Abraham's seed to adore him!

Let the "Amen"
Sum all our praises again
Now as we worship before him.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
O my soul praise him
For he is thy health and salvation.

Amen.



PAT SOLSTAD

Dominick Argento, considered to be America's pre-eminent composer of lyric opera, was born in York, Pennsylvania in 1927. At Peabody Conservatory, where he earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees, his teachers included Nicholas Nabokov, Henry Cowell, and Hugo Weisgall. Argento received his Ph.D. from the Eastman School of Music, where he studied with Alan Hovhaness and Howard Hanson.

Fulbright and Guggenheim Fellowships allowed him to study in Italy with Luigi Dallapiccola and to complete his first opera, *Colonel Jonathan the Saint*. Following his Fulbright, Argento became music director of Hilltop Opera in Baltimore, and taught theory and composition at the Eastman School. In 1958, he joined the faculty of the Regents School of Music at the University of Minnesota, where he taught until 1997. He now holds the rank of Professor Emeritus.

Although Argento's instrumental works have received consistent praise, the great majority of his music is vocal, whether in operatic, choral, or solo context. This emphasis on the human voice is a facet of the powerful dramatic impulse that drives nearly all of his music, both instrumental and vocal. Writer Heidi Waleson has described Argento's work as "richly melodic...[his] pieces are built with wit and passion, and always with the dramatic shape and color that make them theater. They speak to the heart."

Since the early 1970's the composer's operas, which have always found success in the U.S., have been heard with increasing frequency abroad. Nearly all of them, beginning with *Postcard from Morocco* (1971), have had at least one European production. Among these are *The Voyage of Edgar Allan Poe* (1976), *Miss Havisham's Wedding Night* (1981), and

Casanova's Homecoming (1984); Robert Jacobson of *Opera News* described the latter work as "a masterpiece." *The Aspern Papers* was given its premiere by Dallas Opera in November 1988 to great acclaim, was telecast on the PBS series *Great Performances*, and was again presented, to critical praise, by the Washington National Opera in 1990. It has since been heard in Germany and in Sweden; June 1998 brought a performance at the Barbican Center in London.

Other works include *Four Seascapes* for SATB chorus and orchestra (2004), commissioned by the Hanson Institute of American Music, University of Rochester, New York, and dedicated to the Silbey Music Library of Eastman School of Music for their 100th Anniversary; *Three Sonnets of Petrarch* for baritone and piano (2007), commissioned by the Cheltenham Music Festival in the U.K.; and *Evensong: Of Love and Angels* for solo treble voice, solo soprano, reader, mixed chorus, and orchestra (2007), and commissioned by the National Cathedral in Washington, DC for the cathedral's 100th Anniversary. Premieres also include *Cenotaph* for chorus and orchestra, commissioned by the American Choral Directors Association for its 50th Anniversary, and performed in March 2009 at its annual conference in Oklahoma. In addition to new pieces, a volume of Argento's collected writings about his works entitled *Catalog Raisonné as Memoir* was published by the University of Minnesota Press in 2005.

Among other honors and awards, Dominick Argento has received the Pulitzer Prize for Music, given in 1975 for his song cycle *From the Diary of Virginia Woolf*. He received the 2004 Grammy Award for "Best Classical Contemporary Composition," awarded for Frederica von Stade's recording of *Casa Guidi* on the Reference Records label. He also received the 2006 World of Songs Award from the Lotte Lehmann Foundation. He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1979, and in 1997 was honored with the title of Composer Laureate to the Minnesota Orchestra, a lifetime appointment.

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Thomas Oakes, narrator, grew up in the United Kingdom, where he studied engineering at Manchester University. The theater was always a powerful magnet, and he found many outlets to exercise his love for acting. Although often cast in what he describes as “brutish or British” roles—including three separate portrayals of George Bernard Shaw—Mr. Oakes has appeared in a broad array of comedic, dramatic, and musical productions, from Shakespeare to Gilbert and Sullivan operetti, and everything in between.

Mr. Oakes’s performances have been hailed as “searing...stunning, crackling across the set like a jolt of electricity” (*Providence Journal*) and “with restrained power and conviction...masterful” (*Providence Phoenix*). Among his favorite roles he counts Ephraim Cabot in *Desire Under the Elms* (Eugene O’Neill), Giles Corey in *The Crucible* (Arthur Miller), Norman in *The Dresser* (Ronald Harwood), Polonius in *Hamlet* (William Shakespeare), Jabe Torrance in *Orpheus Descending* (Tennessee Williams), and Morten Kiil in *Enemy of the People* (Henrik Ibsen). For several years, Mr. Oakes has performed the patriarch in annual readings of *No Way Out* (Susan Prinz Shear), a play based on the correspondence of a German-Jewish family before, during, and after the Holocaust.

Mr. Oakes has appeared in over 50 productions in the U.K. and the United States, at such venues and companies as the Scranton (Pennsylvania) Cultural Center; Gorilla Theatre in Tampa, Florida; and in Rhode Island, where he now resides, at 2nd Story, The Gamm, NewGate, Perishable, and Firehouse Theatres.

Daniel Norman, tenor, studied in the United States and Canada, and at Oxford University and the Royal Academy of Music in London. Concert engagements include Benjamin Britten’s *War Requiem* in Warsaw; Alban Berg’s *Wozzeck* (Mahler Chamber Orchestra); Handel’s *Messiah* and Bach’s *St. John Passion* (Royal Festival Hall); Michael Tippett’s *A Child of Our*



Time (City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and the Northern Sinfonia); Britten’s *Les Illuminations* and Mozart’s *Requiem* (BBC Philharmonic); *Die schöne Müllerin* (Holywell Music Room, Oxford); Britten’s *Nocturne* (St. John’s Smith Square); Britten’s *Serenade* (Tel Aviv); Stravinsky’s *Les Noces* with Martha Argerich; and Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* (Concertgebouw in the Netherlands and in Denmark). Mr. Norman has also performed Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9 (Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Minnesota Orchestra); Holst’s *Savitri* (Nash Ensemble); the role of Sam Kaplan in

Kurt Weill’s *Street Scenes* (BBC Proms); *St. John Passion* (The King’s Consort); Judas in Birtwistle’s *The Last Supper* (London Sinfonietta in Italy); Argento’s *Jonah and the Whale* (Boston); Britten’s *St. Nicolas* (BBC Concert Orchestra); Mozart’s *Requiem* (St. John’s Smith Square); and Carl Orff’s *Carmina Burana* (Cheltenham and Wexford Festivals). Mr. Norman has held recitals at Wigmore Hall in London and has had regular appearances at the Three Choirs, Cheltenham, Chelsea, Lichfield, and St. Endellion Festivals.

Operatic credits include Borsa in *Rigoletto* (Royal Opera House, Covent Garden); Peter Quint in *The Turn of the Screw* and Dr. Blind in *Die Fledermaus* (Glyndebourne Festival Opera); White Minister in *Le Grand Macabre* (English National Opera); Tanzmeister in *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Garsington Opera and London Symphony Orchestra); Mao in *Nixon in China* (Opera Boston and in Verona); Scaramuccio in *Ariadne auf Naxos* (L’Opéra National de Paris); Elemer in *Arabella* (Garsington Opera); and the title role in Thomas Arne’s *Alfred* (Covent Garden Festival). Mr. Norman also performed the role of the Electrician in Thomas Adès’s *Powder Her Face*, both in David Alden’s Almeida/Aldeburgh production (made into a film for Channel 4), and in its Vienna, Boston, and St. Petersburg premieres.

Further credits include Fenney/Hugo in Richard Rodney Bennett's *The Mines of Sulphur* (Wexford Festival); Bob Boles in Britten's *Peter Grimes* (Endellion Festival); Basilio in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Opera Zuid); Hermes in Tippett's *King Priam* (Reis Opera); and Eurimaco in *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria* and Valetto in *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* (Bayerische Staatsoper opera company in Munich and the New Israeli Opera). In 2002, Mr. Norman received critical acclaim for his performance of the first official staging (with London's homeless men and women) of all five Britten *Canticles* in Westminster Abbey with Streetwise Opera. He can be heard on his debut solo recording, *Britten: Who Are These Children?*, with pianist Christopher Gould (BIS Records).



HELEN TANSEY

Daniel Cole, bass, interrupted his doctoral degree in conducting from Indiana University Jacobs School of Music to pursue a Professional Studies in Opera degree at Temple University. He subsequently won the Metropolitan Opera National Council auditions in the New Jersey district and placed first in the New York regional finals. Since then Mr. Cole has appeared in theaters in Lisbon, Cologne, Taiwan, Amsterdam, and New York. He has performed with numerous regional opera companies in the United States, including Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Dayton Opera, Kentucky Opera, Opera Boston, Utah Festival Opera, Opera Carolina, and Sarasota Opera.

He has also established a respectable concert career, including performances of Penderecki's *St. Luke Passion* with the Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia, Haydn's *Paukenmesse* with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, Bernard Rands's *Canti dell'Eclissi* with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Beethoven's *Mass in C* under the baton of Jane Glover at the State University of New York at Purchase, Mozart's *Mass in C Minor* with the Canton (Ohio) Symphony, and the Mozart *Requiem* in his debut at Carnegie Hall.

Recent recital performances include *Die Winterreise* with pianist William Ransom at the Highlands-Cashiers Chamber Music Festival, and a recital with Martin Katz and Suzanne Metzner at the University of Delaware.

Mr. Cole is the director of music at First Presbyterian Church in Columbia, South Carolina, where he resides with his wife Holly, and sons, Nathanael and Benjamin.



CLAIRE FOLGER

Amanda Forsythe, soprano, made her European debut in 2007, singing Corinna in *Il Viaggio a Reims* at the Rossini Opera Festival in Pesaro. Following her success in Italy, she was immediately engaged at the Grand Théâtre de Genève as Dalinda in Handel's *Ariodante*, where she was proclaimed "the discovery of the evening" (*Financial Times*). She reprised this role in January 2008 at the Bayerische Staatsoper in Munich. Ms. Forsythe's engagements for the 2008/2009 season included Rossini's *L'Equivoco Stravagante* (Rosalia) at the Rossini Opera Festival, Handel's *L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, ed il Moderato* with The Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Barbarina) at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, and Handel's *Xerxes* (Atalanta) with Boston Baroque. Ms. Forsythe's performances also include Rossini's *Tancredi* (Amenaide) with Opera Boston, Verdi's *Falstaff* (Nannetta) and Steffani's *Niobe* (Manto) at Covent Garden, the title role in *Niobe* with The Boston Early Music Festival, and *Falstaff* (Nannetta) with Angers Nantes Opéra.

Joshua Krugman, baritone, has performed with the Providence Singers for the past three seasons and this recording marks Mr. Krugman's debut solo performance with the chorus. Mr. Krugman has performed throughout the United States and has had a career in both opera and oratorio. As a young artist he performed with the Chautauqua Opera Company,



Des Moines Metro Opera, The Britten/Pears Apprentice Program in London, and the Aspen Festival Opera, as well as many regional venues throughout the mid-west. His extensive oratorio performances include Handel's *Messiah*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Faure's *Requiem*, and Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle*. He has also been a featured soloist with the Salisbury Singers as well as with the Sunnyvale Concert Chorale in California. Mr. Krugman has performed under many leading conductors throughout his choral career including the Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Chicago Symphony Chorus.

Mr. Krugman studied voice at the Northwestern University School of Music where he holds both Undergraduate and Master's degrees in Vocal Performance.



Andrew Clark, conductor, has led the Providence Singers into a position of national prominence where it has garnered critical praise for engaging and innovative concerts of choral masterpieces, contemporary music, and rarely performed works. The *Providence Journal* hailed his debut performance as artistic director, as "a smashing success...if the Providence Singers never sang another note, they would have pretty much said it all...it's hard to imagine a professional chorus doing it better."

The Providence Singers received the 2008 Jabez Gorham Award from the Arts & Business Council of Rhode Island for "unwavering commitment to excellence, significant impact in the community, and successful organizational development" and the National Endowment for the Arts has awarded multiple grants to the organization for adventurous projects during his tenure.

In 2008, the Providence Singers released their debut recording, Lukas Foss's cantata *The Prairie*, with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project (BMOP) conducted by Mr. Clark. The first available CD of this seminal work of American music received critical acclaim from publications worldwide as "an artistic triumph" praising "Andrew Clark's appropriately heroic interpretation" (*Choral Journal*), and as a "recording [that] belongs in any decent library of 20th Century music" (*American Record Guide*).

As a fierce advocate for the works of our time, Mr. Clark has commissioned dozens of composers, presented over thirty world premieres, and led numerous performances of important contemporary works. In addition, Mr. Clark frequently conducts choral-orchestral masterpieces, most recently Handel's *Messiah* (Rhode Island Philharmonic), Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, the Mozart *Requiem* and Mendelssohn's *Elijah* (Worcester Chorus and Orchestra), the Faure *Requiem*, Bach's *B-Minor Mass*, the Poulenc *Gloria* and Vaughan Williams's *Dona Nobis Pacem* (Tufts University).

Mr. Clark has collaborated with renowned organizations including the Kronos Quartet, the Pittsburgh Symphony, the New Haven Symphony Orchestra, the Dave Brubeck quartet, the Rhode Island Philharmonic, Opera Boston, and the Newport Jazz Festival, appearing at prestigious venues including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Cathédrale Notre Dame de Paris, Stephansdom, Vienna, Mechanics Hall (Worcester, MA), and throughout Europe and the United States.

As Director of Choral Activities at Tufts University since 2003, Mr. Clark leads a thriving choral performance program, tripling student participation during his tenure. The Tufts choirs have performed at Boston Symphony Hall, Faneuil Hall, and throughout Europe. Mr. Clark frequently conducts high school choral festivals and clinics and serves as a faculty member of the Notes from the Heart Music Camp, a summer program for children with disabilities and chronic illness.

Mr. Clark received degrees from Wake Forest and Carnegie Mellon Universities, and is currently pursuing doctoral studies at Boston University, having studied with Grammy award-winning conductor Robert Page, as well as Jameson Marvin and Ann Howard Jones. He previously served as Music Director of the Worcester Chorus and on the conducting faculties of Harvard and Clark Universities, and as Assistant Conductor of the Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburgh and the Boston Pops Holiday Chorus. He is a member of the national music honor society, Pi Kappa Lambda, and has been recognized by *Chorus America* as one of the United States's most promising young conductors.

The **Providence Singers** celebrates the choral art through concerts of masterworks and current works, new music commissions, education programs, and creative collaborations.

Founded in 1971, the Providence Singers is a 100-voice chorus based in Providence, Rhode Island. The ensemble performs a broad spectrum of choral music, from 17th- to 20th-century landmarks to contemporary works and world premieres. The Providence Singers advances the choral tradition through its commitment to new music commissions, with support of its Wachner Fund for New Music.

The Providence Singers performed with Dave Brubeck at the 50th Anniversary Newport Jazz Festival and premiered Mr. Brubeck's *The Commandments* at Lincoln Center. Other collaborations include Terry Riley's *Sun Rings* with Kronos Quartet at Providence's FirstWorks Festival, and performances with Boston Modern Orchestra Project, New Haven Symphony Orchestra, and Newport Baroque Orchestra. The Providence Singers performs regularly as guest artist with the Rhode Island Philharmonic Orchestra. A CD recording of Lukas Foss's *The Prairie* by the Providence Singers with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project is also available on the BMOP/sound label.

The **Boston Modern Orchestra Project** (BMOP) is widely recognized as the leading orchestra in the United States dedicated exclusively to performing new music, and its signature record label, BMOP/sound, is the nation's foremost label launched by an orchestra and solely devoted to new music recordings.

Founded in 1996 by Artistic Director Gil Rose, BMOP's mission is to illuminate the connections that exist naturally between contemporary music and contemporary society by reuniting composers and audiences in a shared concert experience. In its first twelve seasons, BMOP established a track record that includes more than 80 performances, over 70 world premieres (including 30 commissioned works), two Opera Unlimited festivals with Opera Boston, the inaugural Ditson Festival of Contemporary Music with the ICA/Boston, and 28 commercial recordings, including 12 CD's from BMOP/sound.

In March 2008, BMOP launched its signature record label, BMOP/sound, with John Harbison's ballet *Ulysses*. Its composer-centric releases focus on orchestral works that are otherwise unavailable in recorded form. The response to the label was immediate and celebratory; its five inaugural releases appeared on the "Best of 2008" lists of *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, National Public Radio, *Downbeat*, and *American Record Guide*, among others, and its recording of Charles Fussell's *Wilde* Symphony for baritone and orchestra received a 2009 Grammy Award nomination (Best Classical Vocal Performance). *The New York Times* proclaimed, "BMOP/sound is an example of everything done right. Distinctively packaged and smartly annotated, these eminently desirable discs augur a catalog likely to be as precious as that of another orchestra run initiative, the Louisville Orchestra's pioneering First Edition series." Additional BMOP recordings are available from Albany, Arsis, Chandos, ECM, Innova, Naxos, New World, and Oxingale.

In Boston, BMOP performs at Boston's Jordan Hall and Symphony Hall, and the orchestra has also performed in New York at Miller Theater, the Winter Garden, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, and The Lyceum in Brooklyn. A perennial winner of the ASCAP Award for

Adventurous Programming of Orchestral Music and 2006 winner of the John S. Edwards Award for Strongest Commitment to New American Music, BMOP has appeared at the Celebrity Series (Boston, MA), Tanglewood, the Boston Cyberarts Festival, the Festival of New American Music (Sacramento, CA), and Music on the Edge (Pittsburgh, PA). In April 2008, BMOP headlined the 10th Annual MATA Festival in New York.

BMOP's greatest strength is the artistic distinction of its musicians and performances. Each season, Gil Rose, recipient of Columbia University's prestigious Ditson Conductor's Award as well as an ASCAP Concert Music award for his extraordinary contribution to new music, gathers together an outstanding orchestra of dynamic and talented young performers, and presents some of the world's top vocal and instrumental soloists. *The Boston Globe* claims, "Gil Rose is some kind of genius; his concerts are wildly entertaining, intellectually rigorous, and meaningful." Of BMOP performances, *The New York Times* says: "Mr. Rose and his team filled the music with rich, decisive ensemble colors and magnificent solos. These musicians were rapturous—superb instrumentalists at work and play."

Dominick Argento

Jonah and the Whale

Hans Bohn, trombone; Alexei Doohovskoy, trombone; Angel Subero, trombone; Craig McNutt, timpani; Robert Schulz, percussion; Nick Tolle, percussion; Tomina Parvanova, harp; Patrice Newman, piano; Andrew Galuska, organ

Producer Gil Rose
Recording and Postproduction Joel Gordon and David Corcoran

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Providence Singers: Andrew Clark, Artistic Director; Allison McMillan, Executive Director; Christine Noel, Assistant Conductor

BMOP: Gil Rose, Artistic Director; Catherine Stephan, Executive Director



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