

RODNEY LISTER
OF MERE BEING
CHORAL WORKS

THE CHOIR OF THE CHURCH OF THE ADVENT, BOSTON
CHENGCHENG MA, PIANO
MARK DWYER, CONDUCTOR



Rodney Lister Of Mere Being

Choral Works

The Choir of the Church of the Advent, Boston

Chengcheng Ma, piano

Mark Dwyer, conductor

1. Toward a Supreme Fiction (2000)	1:34
2. A Clear Day and No Memories (1998)	1:32
3. The Snow Man (1999)	2:00
4. Another Weeping Woman (2001)	1:27
5. Of Mere Being (1995)	1:30
6. Never Give All the Heart (2000)	1:47
7. Vanishing Point (2015)	4:40
8. To the Harbormaster (2013)	3:26
9. A Downward Look (2011)	2:30
10. The Lost Feed (2012)	3:46
11. Stanza XV (2003)	2:48
12. Stanza XVI (2004)	0:49
13. Stanza XXXVIII (2002)	1:25
14. On the Road Home (2009)	2:37
15. To the Republic (2017)	4:35
16. Pasture Poem (2007)	1:33
17. Measuring Worm (2016)	3:53
18. Green (2006)	1:27
19. To a Waterfowl (2019)	7:48
20. The Bees (2010)	4:12
21. Our Revels Now Are Ended (2005)	1:49

Total Playing Time 57:51

FROM THE COMPOSER

I taught at Greenwood Music Camp for about thirty years. Greenwood was founded in 1933 by a number of progressive educators, most especially Bunny Little, who was director of the camp for its first 50 years (the second director, Deborah Sherr, stepped down after the 2022 session). Since 1940, Greenwood has been located in Cummington, one of the Pioneer Valley hill towns in western Massachusetts. After the waning of its life as a manufacturing town in the mid nineteenth century, when its population was 1,200, Cummington was mostly a farming town, but, as the home of the important American poet William Cullens Bryant, it was well known to Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau and others in their circle and was a center of abolitionist activity prior to the Civil War. Later It also gained some slight notoriety through a short film from 1945 in the American Office of War Information's "The American Scene" series, entitled *The Cummington Story*, with music by Aaron Copland. More recently, Cummington was also the home of two prominent and more recent American poets, Richard Wilbur and William Jay Smith.

Greenwood, to most of the people who have been associated with it, as students (otherwise known as "campers"), faculty, or their families, is a magical place. In her book *The Sound of Memory*, Rebecca Fischer, now the third director of the camp, described it as "an intensive musical experience for teenagers in a natural environment, fertile for personal and artistic growth and development."¹ She further says, "As a camper at Greenwood in the 1980s and 90s I made the best friends of my life, ran around in bare feet, and played string quartets all day. I also felt free and welcomed for who I was." Although Greenwood's focus in on chamber music, all of the 60 or so campers, as well as playing in the orchestra, also sing in the chorus - otherwise known as "sing," both of which perform in each of the weekly concerts as well as the chamber music groups.

A few years after I started teaching at Greenwood, I began to write pieces for the chorus, all these years directed by Gregory Hayes, and I continued to write a piece almost every year. In my work on compositions for the chorus I was following the examples of two of my teachers. Peter

¹Rebecca Fischer, *The Sound of Memory: Themes from a Violinist's Life* (Columbus: Mad Creek Books, 2022.)

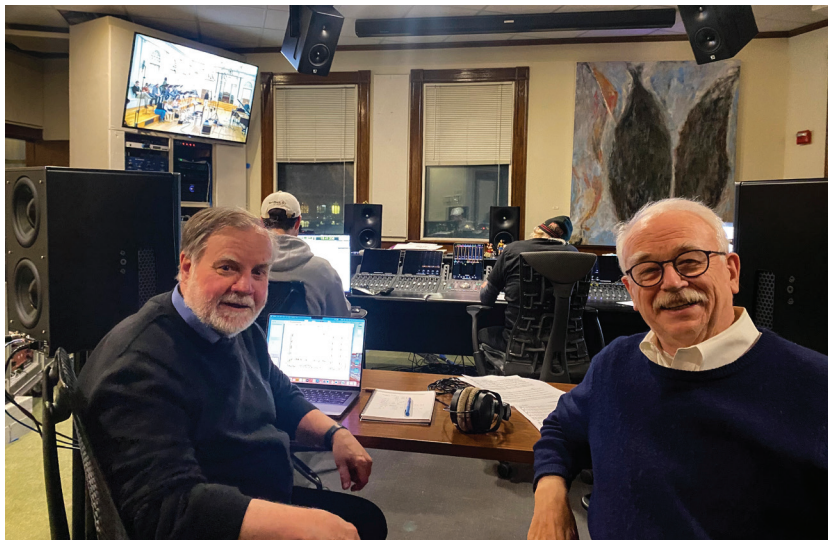
Maxwell Davies, from the beginning of his career, wrote pieces for less advanced musicians, and did not feel limited to a certain style or sound in his work, but was intensely concerned that his works, at whatever level of difficulty and in whatever musical language, were as carefully and seriously made as possible and provided the musicians performing them with a satisfying musical experience. Virgil Thomson in a number of his works set texts that might have been considered to be obscure and difficult in a way that would make those texts seem clear and even sensible. Virgil also was happy to arrange for chorus works that were initially for a different scoring. Following that example, I wrote all the pieces for the Greenwood chorus as solo songs, which I then adapted for chorus and piano.

The earlier pieces I wrote for the Greenwood chorus were settings of early twentieth-century modernist poems by Gertrude Stein and Wallace Stevens, and were in a fairly transparently tonal language. After a while, I began to develop for myself a somewhat more complex and fluid language. The door for me into that more extended language was a piece of Virgil's called *Wheat Fields at Noon*, which is based on the use of four discrete triads that contain between them all twelve notes (in the case of *Wheat Fields* F minor, G minor, A major, and B major). Playing around with that idea I found that if one took the alternating triads, for instance F minor and A major, the notes, which are alternating half steps and minor thirds, also produce six different triads, which can be connected by various stepwise motions. Another piece that was important to me at this point was Gesualdo's madrigal *Moro lasso*, which begins with four triads that contain eleven notes (if the mode of the last triad were changed, those chords would contain twelve different notes). In my setting of a section of my friend David Ferry's translation of the *Georgics* by Virgil, *The Bees*, I used the triads from the Gesualdo as a building block for the piece. From the time of *The Bees* onward, the pieces I wrote for the Greenwood chorus set a variety of different texts from different times and trafficked in a tonally fluid triadic style. The scope of the pieces was initially rather limited, but through the years, due to the skill of Greg Hayes and the ability of the campers, some of the pieces got to be of a larger scale; possibly the biggest of these was the setting of *To a Waterfowl* by the local poet William Cullen Bryant.

My association with Greenwood was terminated in 2024, so this recording is a documentation of my time there, and a record of a place that was very important and meaningful in my life. It contains most of the pieces I wrote for the Greenwood chorus. The penultimate piece, almost as large as the Bryant piece, was a setting of *A Supermarket in California* by Allen Ginsberg, which is not included in the recording. It was followed by the final piece for the chorus, a setting of *When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer* by Whitman, written after the recording was

made. Also not included, though, is a setting of *This Is the Garden* by E. E. Cummings, which somehow, during the rehearsal and recording for this album, we all forgot about. The recording does include, though, one piece not written for the Greenwood chorus, a setting of *Never Give All the Heart* by W. B. Yeats for unaccompanied chorus, which was written for the chorus of Newton North High School, but not performed before this recording.

Rodney Lister



Richard Cornell, producer, and Rodney Lister

NOTES ON THE MUSIC

They say you like the music your friends compose. For me, Rodney Lister's music certainly bears this out. In it I find so much of what I value in Rodney himself: quick-witted curiosity, learning broad and deep, an exquisite nose for poetry, and a sense of community. His compositional horizons encompass high modernism and accessible lyricism with equal skill and conviction; every piece has its own profile, and the profile remains securely his.

The choral works recorded here speak to his engagement with other musicians—young ones who gather every summer at Greenwood Music Camp. He describes the experience of Greenwood as “magical”; in these pieces we can feel some of the magic.

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As Rodney notes, the compositions on this recording divide into two groups distinguished by their different harmonic languages. The earlier ones—bookended by settings of Wallace Stevens—adopt a diatonic modality: strictly so in six of them (*Of Mere Being*, *Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction*, *Another Weeping Woman*, *Stanza XVI*, *Stanza XXXVIII*, *Green*), at moments chromatically expanded in the others (*A Clear Day and No Memories*, *The Snow Man*, *Never Give All Your Heart*, *Stanza XV*, *Our Revels Now are Ended*, *A Pasture Poem*, *On the Road Home*).

But the statistics don't really tell the story. The main poets of these pieces, Stevens and Gertrude Stein, speak mostly in a plain voice, but always elusively. The diatonic settings heighten the paradox. Rodney observes how Virgil Thomson could “set texts that might have been considered to be obscure and difficult in a way that would make those texts clear and even sensible,” and the same definitely applies here. Yet I would go beyond that: In these pieces, the outward simplicity of the music only deepens the mysterious quality of the verse. Consider, for example, *Of Mere Being*: The limpid melody of “As Of Mere Being” puts the arresting image almost palpably within reach, yet in that very moment removes it even further from our grasp. Or consider, in *A Clear Day and No Memories*, how the flatward harmonic shift at “Young and living” brings the “people now dead” compellingly to life “as they were fifty years ago”—and how the subsequent return of these same harmonies makes the second strophe all the more

haunting, with the spectral figures still present as the air “flows over us without meanings / As if none of us had ever been here before.” Of course, the music will pay attention to less hermetic poetry equally well: A similar glance away from the hitherto untrammelled G Aeolian in *Never Give All the Heart*—A^b instead of A, then immediately back to natural—lets us feel both the sweetness and the evanescence of “everything that’s lovely,” while a sudden E^b in the final line delivers the mortal stab to him “who gave all his heart and lost.”



After the last Stevens setting, *On the Road Home* (full disclosure: dedicated to me), Rodney began to evolve “the more complex and fluid, but still triadic, language” that underlies all the subsequent pieces. Here I must get even a bit more technical—and, if Rodney will forgive me, elaborate on some of what he himself says about these pieces. As he writes, he found a “door” to his extended language in Virgil Thomson’s *Wheat Field at Noon*, a piece based on four triads—two minor, two major, with roots a whole tone apart—that between them contain all twelve pitches of the chromatic scale: F minor, G minor, A major, and B major. Shuffling the order, he hit on two triadic pairs: F minor–A major and G minor–B major; and at the same time, it would appear, he noticed a relationship between this configuration and Gesualdo’s *Moro lasso al mio duolo*, which famously begins with the triads C[#] major, A minor, B major, and G major. Turn the last of these into minor and you again get all twelve chromatic pitches—and, no less tellingly, Rodney’s twinned pairs a whole tone higher and in reverse.

All of this starts to percolate in *The Bees*. The surprising opening chords—E major, C minor—give us one of those major-minor pairs at yet another pitch level; and harmonic-minor scales associated with these triads—the first presented mostly as G[#] Aeolian—guide the buzzing insects in their flight throughout. But listen particularly when the poet turns from the bees to address us (“And so, when you look up ... Take heed, for there they are”): With the buzzing paused, we twice hear the entire Gesualdo progression in Rodney’s total-chromatic tweaking.

Thomson’s four chords, meanwhile, become an essential building block of the next piece, *A Downward Look*—first in pervasive whole-tone figures in the piano; briefly in the men’s voices (“over protuberances”); and finally spun out literally, if again at different pitch levels, over whole tones in the bass, in the three climactic lines “On high ...,” “Still radiates ...,” and “When, far beneath ...” Rodney’s own “source set”—the minor-major pairs on F–A and G–B—begins to crystallize shortly afterwards in *To the Harbormaster*: You can hear the first pair clearly when

the voices enter (“I wanted to be sure to reach you”), the second just after the ship “got caught up in some moorings”: “always tying up and then deciding”—with a last-minute swerve back to F minor and A major—“to depart.” But again, merely describing what happens doesn’t get at how the setting itself takes on the instability and indecision of the speaker.

To the Harbormaster forms a sort of conceptual pair with the slightly later *A Measuring Worm*, both written *in memoriam*—the first for a friend and colleague of both Rodney’s and mine, the composer Harold Shapero; the second for his wife, the artist Esther Geller. Here, the source-set infuses the textures even more deeply. To quote Rodney again, in each pair of triads “the notes, which are alternating half steps and minor thirds, also produce six different triads.” Within F minor and A major, for instance, one has the six notes F–G[#]–A–C–C[#]–E as well as the additional triads F major, A minor, and both major and minor triads on C[#] (or D^b). Listen closely to the opening: Just within the first six beats you hear C[#] minor, A major, and F minor in the right hand while the inchworm left climbs through all six notes of the chord pair, “Constantly ... Humping up his back.” And listen, then, at the end, to how a new configuration of those same six notes becomes the poet, not knowing “Toward what undreamt condition / Inch by inch I go.”

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One can say so much more about these and all the pieces on this recording: about the luminous choral textures, the artfully natural declamation, the often unusual but deftly calibrated layout of the piano parts. But it would take too long to do so. Nevertheless, I hope these samples both provide some sense of the music and open up pathways into it. Above all, I hope they make it clear that Rodney Lister’s music, no less than the poetry he chooses, deserves thinking about. Even more, however, it rewards *hearing*: for the ways its surface, even at its simplest, draws us into deeper things. Listen to it closely, attending—as Rodney does—to words and notes in equal measure.

Joshua Rifkin

TEXTS

Of Mere Being (poems by Wallace Stevens)

Notes Toward A Supreme Fiction

And for what, except for you, do I feel love?
Do I press the extremest book of the wisest man
Close to me, hidden in me day and night?
In the uncertain light of single, certain truth,
Equal in living chaningness to the light
In which I meet you, in which we sit at rest,
For a moment in the central of our being
The vivid transparence that you bring is peace.

A Clear Day and No Memories

No soldiers in the scenery,
No thoughts of people now dead,
As they were fifty years ago,
Young and living in a live air,
Young and walking in the sunshine,
Bending in blue dresses to touch something,
Today the mind is not part of the weather.

Today the air is clear of everything.
It has no knowledge except of nothingness And it
flows over us without meanings, As if none of us
had ever been here before
And are not now: in this shallow spectacle, This
invisible activity, this scene.

The Snow Man

One must have a mind of winter
To regard the frost and the boughs
Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;

And have been cold a long time
To behold the junipers shagged with ice,
The spruces rough in the distant glitter

Of the January sun; and not to think
Of any misery in the sound of the wind,
In the sound of a few leaves,

Which is the sound of the land
Full of the same wind
That is blowing in the same bare place

For the listener, who listens in the snow,
And, nothing himself, beholds
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

Another Weeping Woman

Pour the unhappiness out
From your too bitter heart,
Which grieving will not sweeten.

Poison grows in this dark.
It is in the water of tears
Its black blooms rise.
The magnificent cause of being,
The imagination, the one reality
In this imagined world

Leave you
With him for whom no phantasy moves,
And you are pierced by a death.

Of Mere Being

The palm at the end of the mind,
Beyond the last thought, rises
In the bronze distance,

A gold-feathered bird
Sings in the palm, without human meaning,
Without human feeling, a foreign song.

You know then it is not the reason
That makes us happy or unhappy.
The bird sings. Its feathers shine.

The palm stand on the edge of space.
The wind moves slowly in the branches.
The bird's fire-fangled feathers dangle down.

Never Give All the Heart (by W. B. Yeats)

Never give all the heart, for love
Will hardly seem worth thinking of
To passionate women if it seem
Certain, and they never dream
That it fades out from kiss to kiss;
For everything that's lovely is
But a brief, dreamy, kind delight.
O never give the heart outright,
For they, for all smooth lips can say,
Have given their hearts up to the play.
And who could play it well enough
If deaf and dumb and blind with love?
He that made this knows all the cost,
For he gave all his heart and lost.

Vanishing Point (by Lawrence Rabb)

You're walking down a road
which someone has drawn to illustrate
the idea of perspective, and you are there
to provide a sense of scale.
See how the road narrows in the distance,
becoming a point at which
everything connects, or flies apart.
That's where you're headed.
The rest of the world is a blank page
of open space. Did you really think
you were just out for an aimless stroll?
And those mountains on the horizon:
the longer you look, the more forbidding
they become, bleak and self-important,
like symbols. But of what?
The future, perhaps.
Destiny. Or the opposite.
The perpetual present, the foolishness of purpose.
At evening they recede into the sky

as if they had always been the sky.
Is it a relief to know you'll never reach them?
Is there any comfort in believing
you're needed where you are?
The rest of the world is a blank page
of open space. But of what?
Destiny. At evening they recede into the sky

Is it a relief to know you'll never reach them?
Is there any comfort in believing
you're needed where you are?

To the Harbormaster (by Frank O'Hara)

I wanted to be sure to reach you;
though my ship was on the way it got caught
in some moorings. I am always tying up
and then deciding to depart. In storms and
at sunset, with the metallic coils of the tide around
my fathomless arms, I am unable
to understand the forms of my vanity
or I am hard alee with my Polish rudder
in my hand and the sun sinking. To
you I offer my hull and the tattered cordage
of my will. The terrible channels where
the wind drives me against the brown lips
of the reeds are not all behind me. Yet
I trust the sanity of my vessel; and
if it sinks it may well be in answer
to the reasoning of the eternal voices,
the waves which have kept me from reaching you.

A Downward Look (by James Merrill)

Seen from above, the sky
Is deep. Clouds float down there,
Foam on a long, luxurious bath.
Their shadows over limbs submerged in 'air',

Over protuberances, faults,
A delta thicket, glide. On high, the love

That drew the bath and scattered it with salts

Still radiates new projects old as day,
And hardly registers the tug

When, far beneath, a wrinkled, baby hand Happens
upon the plug.

The Lost Feed (directions for an improvised play by Kenneth Koch)

Seven actresses, impersonating hens and chickens,
should, while retaining their human modesty and
dignity, act out in as chicken-like a way as possible
the drama of the lost feed. The feed for the day is
missing. None of the hens or chickens present is
responsible for the absence of the feed, but each
one suspects that some one of the others on-stage
may be the culprit. Whatever the hens and chickens
do, they should make no strictly personal remarks
when they accuse one another. Their accusations
should be rather flat and rather general, accusations
which could be leveled at anybody about just about
anything. Chicken life is not thought to be very
differentiated. After the chickens and hens have
been arguing for a long time, the feed should be
brought in and given to them.

Stanzas in Meditation

(poems by Gertrude Stein)

Stanza XVI

Would they call me what they call me
When they come to call on me
And should I be satisfied with all three
When all three are with me
Or should I say may they stay
Or will they stay with me
On no account must they cry out
About which one went where they went
In time to stay away may be they do
But I doubt it
As they were very much able to stay there However
may they go if they say so

Stanza XV

I have thought that I would not mind if they came
But I do.
I also thought that it made no difference if they came
But I does
I also was willing to be found that I was here
Which I am
I am not only destined by not destined to doubt
Which I do.
Leave me to tell exactly well that which I tell.
This is what is known.
If felt well and now I do too
That they could not wish to do
What they could do if
They were not only there where they were to care
If they did as they said
Which I meant I could engage to have
Not only am I mine in time
Of course when all is said

Which I meant I could engage to have
Not only am I mine in time
Of course when all is said
May be I do but I doubt it.
This is how it should begin
If one were to announce it as begun
One and one.
Let any little one be right.
At least to move.

Stanza XXXVIII

Which I wish to say is this
There is no beginning to an end
But there is a beginning and an end to beginning.
Why yes of course.
Any one can learn that north of course
Is not only north but north as north
Why were they worried.
What I wish to say is this.
Yes of course.

On the Road Home (by Wallace Stevens)

It was when I said,
"There is no such thing as the truth,"
That the grapes seemed fatter.
The fox ran out of his hole.

You. . . You said, "
There are many truths,
But they are not parts of a truth."
Then the tree, at night, began to change,

Smoking through green and smoking blue.
We were two figures in a wood.
We said we stood alone.

It was when I said,
"Words are not forms of a single word.
In the sum of the parts, there are only the parts. The
world must be measured by eye";

It was when you said,
"The idols have seen lots of poverty,
Snakes and gold and lice,
But not the truth";

It was at that time, that the silence was largest And
longest, the night was roundest,
The fragments of the autumn warmest,
Closest and strongest.

To the Republic (by Frank Bidart)

I dreamt I saw a caravan of the dead
start out again from Gettysburg.

Close-packed upright in rows on railcar flat-
beds in the sun, they soon will stink.

Victor and vanquished shoved together, dirt
had bleached the blue and gray one color.

Risen again from Gettysburg, as if
the state were shelter crawled to through

blood, risen, disconsolate that we
now ruin the great work of time.

they roll in outrage across America.

You betray us is blazoned across each chest. To
each eye as they pass: You betray us.

Assaulted by the impotent dead, I say it's
their misfortune and none of my own.

I dreamt I saw a caravan of the dead
move on wheels touching rails without sound.
To each eye as they pass: *You betray us.*

Three Poems of Richard Wilbur

A Pasture Poem

This upstart thistle
Is young and touchy; it is
All barb and bristle,

Threatening to wield
Its green, jagged armament
Against the whole field.

Butterflies will dare
Nonetheless to lay their eggs
In that angle where

The leaf meets the stem,
so that ants or browsing cows
Cannot trouble them.

Summer will grow old
As will the thistle, letting
A clenched bloom unfold

To which the small hum
Of bee wings and the flash of
Goldfinch wings will come,

Till its purple crown
Blanches, and the breezes strew
The whole field with down.

A Measuring Worm

This yellow striped green
Caterpillar, climbing up
The steep window screen,

Constantly (for lack
Of a full set of legs) keeps
Humping up his back.

It's as if he sent
By a sort of semaphore
Dark omegas meant

To warn of Last Things.
Although he doesn't know it,
He will soon have wings,

And I, too, don't know
Toward what undreamt condition
Inch by inch I go.

Green

Tree-leaves which, till the growing season's done,
Change into wood the powers of the sun,

Take from that radiance only reds and blues.
Green is a color that they cannot use,

And so their rustling myriads are seen
To wear all summer an extraneous green,

A green with no apparent role, unless
To be the symbol of a great largesse

Which has no end, though autumns may revoke
That shade from yellowed ash and rusted oak.

To a Waterfowl (by William Cullen Bryant)

Whither, midst falling dew,
While glow the heavens with the last steps of day
Far, through their rosy depths, dost thou pursue
Thy solitary way?

Vainly the fowler's eye
Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong
As, darkly seen against the crimson sky,
Thy figure floats along.

Seek'st thou the plashy brink
Of weedy lake, or marge of river wide,
Or where the rocking billows rise and sing
On the chafed ocean side?

There is a Power whose care
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast—
The desert and illimitable air—
Lone wandering, but not lost.

All day thy wings have fanned,
At that far height, the cold, thin atmosphere, Yet
stoop not, weary, to the welcome land, Though the
dark night is near.

And soon that toil shall end;
Soon shalt thou find a summer home, and rest,
And scream among thy fellows; reeds shall bend,
Soon, o'er thy sheltered nest.

Thou'rt gone, the abyss of heaven
Hath swallowed up thy form; yet, on my heart
Deeply has sunk the lesson thou hast given, And
shall not soon depart.

He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright.

The Bees

(by Virgil, translated by David Ferry)

When the golden sun has driven winter back down
Under the earth and opened up the sky
With the radiance of summer, then the bees
Fly everywhere through all the groves and glades,
Gathering from the beautiful flowers and lightly
Imbibing from the surface of the streams.
It's thus that, motivated by some joy
I know not how to name, they go about
The caring for their offspring and their nests;
It's thus that artfully they make new wax
And shape and form and mold their clinging honey.

And so, when you look up and see the swarm,
Emancipated from the hive and floating
Up to the starry sky through the summer air,
Or when you wonder at the sight of a dark
Cloud carried along and drifting on the wind,
Take heed, for there they are, on the hunt for leafy
Shelter near sweet water.

The bees will settle, of themselves, upon
The scented settling places you've prepared,
And of themselves will hide themselves within
The inner recesses of their cradling home.

Some say

The bees have drunk from the light of heaven and have
A share in the divine intelligence,
For the god, they say, is there in everything
In earth and the range of sea and the depth of sky;
The flocks, the herds, and men, all creatures there are,
At birth derive their little lives from him,
And when they die their life returns to him,
And having been unmade is made again;
There is, they say, no place at all for death;

The life of beings flies up to the stars
And finds its place there in the heaven above.

Our Revels Now are Ended

(by William Shakespeare)

Our revels now are ended.

These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits and
Are melted into air, into thin air;
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe it-self,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind.

We are such stuff

As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded in a sleep.



Frank Cunningham (L), Rodney Lister, and Richard Cornell



Rodney Lister, Mark Dwyer, and Chengcheng Ma



The performers, producer, and composer

BIOGRAPHIES

Rodney Lister has received commissions, grants, and fellowships from the Berkshire Music Center, the Fromm Foundation at Harvard, the Koussevitzky Music Foundation at the Library of Congress, the Fires of London, the Poets' Theatre, the Virgil Thomson Foundation, the Preparatory School of the New England Conservatory, Dinosaur Annex Music Ensemble, the Master Singers, the International Barbara Pymm Society, the MacDowell Colony, and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, among others. He was co-founder and co-director of Music Here & Now, a concert series of new music by Boston-area composers at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (1971-1973), and from 1976 until 1982 was music coordinator of Dinosaur Annex Music Ensemble. The great American composer Milton Babbitt wrote, "Rodney Lister's achievements as composer, pianist, and conductor are of the greatest interest to those of us who take music as seriously as he does."

Rodney Lister's works have been performed by Joel Smirnoff, Tammy Grimes, Phyllis Curtin, Jane Manning, Mary Thomse, Michael Finnissy, Kathleen Supové, Jonah Sirota, Rebecca Fischer, Boston Cecelia, the Blair and Chiara Quartets, Collage New Music, and the Fires of London, among others, at Tanglewood, the Library of Congress, the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, and in New York and London, among other places. As a pianist, he has been involved in premieres, first US performances, first UK performances, or first Boston performances of works by Virgil Thomson, Peter Maxwell Davies, Milton Babbitt, Michael Finnissy, Philip Grange, Lee Hyla, and Paul Bowles, among others. He is currently on the faculties of the Boston University School of Music, where he teaches composition and theory and is the director of Time's Arrow, the new music ensemble of the School of Music, and the Preparatory School of the New England Conservatory, where he teaches composition, piano, theory, and chamber music and is the director of the school's annual festival of new music. He is also a music tutor at Pforzheimer House, Harvard University, and from 1993 to 2024 was on the faculty of Greenwood Music Camp. His articles and reviews have appeared in *The Grove Dictionary of American Music*, *Tempo*, *Sequenza21*, *American Music*, and the *Paris New Music Review*.

Rodney Lister received his early musical training at the Blair School of Music in Nashville, Tennessee. He was a student at the New England Conservatory of Music (Bachelor of Music degree, with honors) from 1969 to 1973, and at Brandeis University (Master of Fine Arts degree) from 1973 to 1977, from which he received a doctorate in 2000. He studied privately with Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, and was a member of Davies's' composition seminar at the Dartington Hall Summer School of Music (1975, 1978, 1980–82). He was a Bernstein fellow at the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood in 1973. His composition teachers, aside from Davies, have been Malcolm Peyton, Donald Martino, Harold Shapero, Arthur Berger, and Virgil Thomson. He also studied piano with Enid Katahn, David Hagan, Robert Helps, and Patricia Zander.

The Choir of The Church of the Advent, Boston, is a professional choir with the prime responsibility of providing appropriate music for the liturgy in this Anglo-Catholic parish. In a year's time they will have sung about 50 Mass settings, and over 100 anthems, motets, canticles, carols, etc., in addition to a body of chants. While specializing in Renaissance polyphony, the choir's repertoire is truly catholic, spanning all historical periods from Gregorian chant to world premieres. The Advent Choir's performance has achieved both national and international recognition, including critically-acclaimed compact disc recordings on the Arsis and AFKA labels. The choir's performances have been broadcast on National Public Radio, BBC Radio 3, as well as Boston's WGBH. They have presented many concerts here and abroad and were a featured ensemble in the 1990 and 2014 American Guild of Organists National Conventions, the 1994 and 2003 Boston Early Music Festival concert series, the 1999 American Guild of Organists Region I Convention in Worcester, Massachusetts, and the 1999 and 2019 Boston Conferences of the Association of Anglican Musicians.

Mark Dwyer has held the position of Organist and Choirmaster of The Church of the Advent, Boston since 2007. He has held similar positions at St. Paul's Church, K Street in Washington, DC and The Cathedral of All Saints in Albany, New York. Dr Dwyer is active as an organ recitalist, having presented programs throughout the United States and in England. He conducts The Advent Choir, an all-professional ensemble of 18 singers which presents over 100 anthems and motets in addition to fifty choral settings of the mass each year for the liturgies of The Church of the Advent. During his tenure, The Advent Choir has become known not only for their stylish performances of Renaissance polyphony, but also for their impassioned readings of 20th and 21st-century works. His work as conductor, accompanist and recitalist may be heard on the JAV,

Arsis, and AFKA recording labels. Mark Dwyer is a graduate of the New England Conservatory; in 2012, Nashotah House Seminary awarded him the degree, Doctor of Music, honoris causa, in recognition of his contributions to the field of sacred music.

Pianist **Chengcheng Ma** is a distinguished artist celebrated for his achievements in numerous international piano competitions. His concerto performances with orchestras such as Sinfonia da Camera, the Hebei Province Symphony Orchestra, the Brookline Symphony Orchestra, and the Boston University Symphony Orchestra showcase his ability to bring both technical precision and emotional depth to his interpretations. Under the direction of accomplished conductors including Ian Hobson, James Burton, Peng Tuo, and Andrew Altenbach, Chengcheng has demonstrated remarkable versatility, performing major works by composers ranging from Mozart to John Corigliano with equal conviction and artistry. A passionate collaborator with contemporary composers, he also specializes in the music of iconic jazz pianists.

SINGERS

SOPRANO

Anney Barrett
Judah Coffman
Janet Stone
Sarah Vitale
Laura Ziegler

TENOR

Andrew Bearden Brown
Charles Blandy
Corey Dalton Hart
Francesco Logozzo

ALTO

Emerald Barbour
Julia Cavallaro
Catherine Hedberg
Katherine Meifert

BASS

Glenn Billingsley
Stephan Griffin
Thann Scoggin
Sumner Thompson

Recorded at Futura Productions, Roslindale, MA January 16-18, 2023

Recorded, produced, edited, mixed & mastered by Frank Cunningham

Produced by Richard Cornell

Cover painting "Village Church" by Christopher Bagg, oil on linen 14'x19', 2003

Design and layout by James Cardell-Oliver

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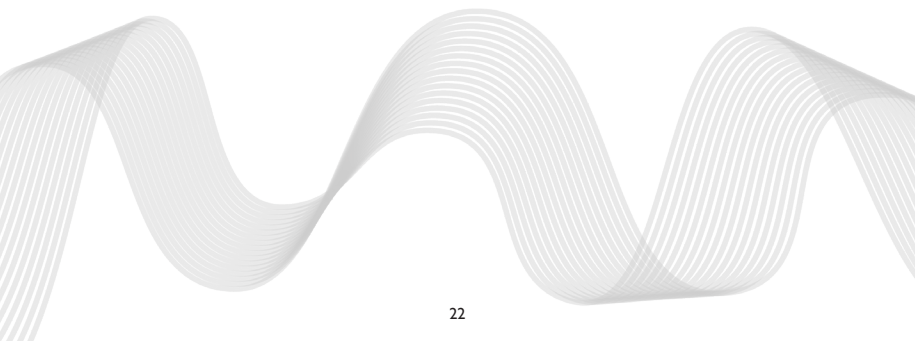
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