

# ECLIPTIC

## PROGRAM NOTES

### ***Sure on this Shining Night* - Samuel Barber**

Among the most successful of his works is the song *Sure on This Shining Night*. Based on an untitled poem by James Agee, the melody soars through long, arching vocal lines accented by tasteful counterpoint within the accompaniment. The tune achieved such acclaim, he even used its opening phrase to coax a friend's phone number out of a telephone operator!

### ***Alive and Aware* - Nathan Halbur**

*Alive and Aware* is a musical setting of Carl Sagan's opening monologue from the 1980 television series *Cosmos: A Personal Voyage*. The words have been adapted & edited by Nathan, transforming prose into poetry. Imagining humans at the shore of a cosmic ocean, the piece reckons with both the immensity & the minutiae of our universe. The music begins with hypnotically pulsing waves of "all that is or was, all that ever will be," and slowly builds to a shocking climactic epiphany that "the cosmos has become alive and aware" (in the form of human life).

### ***In the Beginning* - Aaron Copland**

*In the Beginning* is a setting of the first passages of Genesis, in which God takes seven days to create the universe and breathe life into humanity. "Based on the part of the King James Version of the Bible concerned with the seven days of creation, Copland chose a mezzo-soprano soloist and mixed chorus acapella to tell the oft-told story. As he explained, "I was striving for a gentle narrative style using the biblical phrase 'And the next day . . . ' to round off each section." Robert Shaw conducted the premiere in Memorial Hall at Harvard and again in New York at Carnegie Hall; Nell Tangemen sang the difficult but extraordinarily effective solo part." - Vivian Perlis in 1998

### ***Creation Myth* - Nathan Halbur**

*Creation Myth* sets a poem by Ayla Goktan, and is the opening movement of Nightingale's Lux Suite. The musical language is derived from the sound of a "singing bowl" owned by Artistic Director Ben Perry. The piece is an expressionistic take on the infinitely compact and dense first moments of the very early universe.

### ***The Invention of Starlight* - Nicholas Ford**

*The Invention of Starlight* is a meditation on the Cosmic Dark Ages and the formation of the very first stars in the Universe. Based on what cosmologists are able to study from the cosmic microwave background radiation, it is possible to determine a basic timeline of events beginning from the time of the Big Bang. After the initial expansion of the universe, temperatures were too high to allow energy to congeal into matter, and the light created in the first moments of time was trapped in this cloud of radiation in expanding space. It was not until the universe cooled sufficiently to allow subatomic particles to form that Hydrogen came into being. Because Hydrogen is a transparent gas, all the

trapped light was suddenly free to travel unimpeded, and the universe entered a darkness lasting hundreds of millions of years. It was not until gravity brought together massive clouds of condensing Hydrogen that the very first stars were formed, and the darkness was interrupted by islands of light given off by primordial supermassive stars. In this piece written for Nightingale Vocal Ensemble, the universe's progression from birth through a long darkness, and emergence into a new era of radiance, is likened to a spiritual journey. What is left when we lose all we know of ourselves and must transform to survive? What will we leave behind, and what will be forged anew? Growth is an auspicious chaos, impossible to predict or control, yet unavoidable; it demands that we yield to the path so ordained for us. It is a needful and violent sort of spiritual evolution: a journey from darkness to a new and radiant version of ourselves.

### ***Or HaGanuz* - Michal Nissimoff**

In the Jewish tradition of Kabbalah, *Or HaGanuz*, meaning "the hidden light," symbolizes the divine essence concealed within all aspects of creation, awaiting discovery through spiritual enlightenment. Intrigued by this concept, my piece delves into the notion that the first light was not merely the sun, but rather a radiant energy suffusing the void. From this energy emerged the spiritual essence of creation, imbuing the universe with divine purpose and significance. *Or HaGanuz* also symbolizes the light within each of us, uniting humanity on a profound level. It suggests a deeper, interconnected reality beyond our individual experiences, accessible through introspection and spiritual exploration. As the spiritual essence or life force animating all creation, *Or HaGanuz* embodies the underlying unity and interconnectedness of existence, reminding us of our inherent connection to the universe.

### ***I will tell you how the sun rose* - Laura Nevitt**

When researching the sun, the things that struck me the most were its massiveness, its violence, and perpetual motion. Reflecting this (and as a nod to Terry Riley's *In C*), there are almost always constant 8th notes on a C. Along with Emily Dickinson's captivating poem, I've included scientific facts about the sun, the amethyst, the bobolink, layered into the choral parts, and the song of the Bobolink is in the violins near the end of the piece. The sun - an enormity of powerful chaos, that brings so much of the earth to life.

### ***Like a Halo* - Nathan Halbur**

*Like a Halo* sets a poem by Ayla Goktan, and is the closing movement of Nightingale's *Lux Suite*. The first iteration of the piece was a collective improvisation performed during the 2022 recording sessions for Nightingale's album *Composition Sped Up*, interpreting Ayla's words as a prompt for spontaneous musical creation. Nathan Halbur (who acted as Producer for that album) has adapted that original performance through a combination of transcribed and newly composed material, fully exploring Wayne Shorter's remark that "composition is just improvisation slowed down, and improvisation is just composition sped up." The piece is a reflection on light, not so much as a physical phenomenon, but instead as an aspect of human emotion and intimacy.