

ABBIE BETINIS

GOD OF OWLS

(soloists, SSAATTBB a cappella chorus)

*Commissioned by Ensemble of the North
Patrick McDonough, conductor*

Premiered May 2004, Minneapolis, Minnesota

GOD OF OWLS and of all night creatures,
both great and small, walk also with us
who fear the dark. Accustom our eyes
to that part of the world which turns away
from the sun; prevent us from being blind
to what we're afraid to see.

Whenever our spirit is sleepless,
share us stars to outline a landmark tree
or to see the sheltering hills.
Teach our feet to feel for the ground
where brave souls have walked before us.

- Anonymous

Program Note:

The poem, *God of Owls*, is taken from a collection of five poems written anonymously as a gift from the poet to St. George's Church in New York City. The internationally renowned American poet, a student of Robert Frost, included only this note in the collection, entitled beyond our fears:

“Because it is his belief that every man stretches, in prayer, beyond the more selfish aspects of his identity, the writer prefers that these prayers be printed anonymously. He hopes that each reader may, thus, come to these prayers as if the words were his own.”

I was drawn to this text particularly after Patrick started to tell me about his wife Peteria, to whom this piece is dedicated. He gushed words like “lovely,” “spiritual,” “dramatic,” and “free.” It is with these words in mind that I began to set the text.

I hope that the music evokes a sense of humble spirituality, perhaps even that mysterious feeling of walking through the woods at night, all senses heightened. It is a place where every small noise becomes great, every ordinary tree a looming shadow... until, eventually these nocturnal sounds and shadows start to appear familiar, even comforting. Musically, the nebulous harmonies of the opening phrase develop into a repeated pattern of bird calls in the men's voices, through which the melody finds strength.

To me, this is a piece about hope, and about great trust. Eventually, I intend to set all five prayers in a larger choral work entitled *Beyond Our Fears: five prayers for today*, which will use the universality of the unconditional love of a greater Being as its central theme.

I'd like to thank Ann Miller for helping me contact the anonymous poet, as well as Patrick McDonough and *Ensemble of the North* for giving me great liberty with this project. It has been a pleasure.

- Abbie Betinis, May 2004

GOD OF OWLS

Commissioned for Ensemble of the North by Patrick McDonough,
And dedicated to Peteria McDonough,
in celebration of their Fifth Wedding Anniversary

ANON.

ABBIE BETINIS

Mysteriously, ♩ = c. 92

pp *cresc.* *mp*

Soprano
God of owls, _____ of owls, _____ and of all _____

pp *cresc.* *mp*

Alto
God of owls, God of owls, _____ and of all, all _____

pp *cresc.* *mp*

Tenor
God of owls, God of owls, _____ and of all, all _____

pp *cresc.* *mp*

Bass
God of owls, _____ God of owls, _____ and of all, all _____

6

solo

6

S

A

T

B

night_ crea - tures,_____

night crea - tures,_____

night crea - tures,_____

night_ crea - tures,_____

solo: hoo³ hoo³ hoo³

solo: aw aw aw

9

solo

9

S

A

T

B

God of all both_ great_ and small,

God of God_ of all both great and small,

God of all God of both great and small,

God of all_ both great and small,

hoo³ hoo³ aw aw aw tu - it tu - it

p *cresc.* *f* *sub p*

p *cresc.* *f* *sub p*

p *cresc.* *f* *sub p*

p *cresc.* *f* *sub p*

15 *mf* *sub pp*

S God... walk al - so with us who fear the da...(rk)_

A *p* *pp* *p* *mf* *sub pp*
 God of owls, God of owls, God... walk al - so with us who fear the dark._

T *p* *pp* *p* *mf* *sub pp*
 8 God of owls, God of owls, God... walk al - so with us who fear the dark._

B *p* *pp* *p* *mf* *sub pp*
 God of owls, God of owls, God... walk al - so with us who fear the dark.

2I *aw aw aw*

solo hoo hoo tu - it tu - it

2I

S

A *reverently mp*
 Ac - cus - tom our eyes, Ac - cus - tom our eyes

T *reverently mp*
 8 Ac - cus - tom our eyes, Ac - cus - tom our eyes, our

B *mf*
 Ac - cus - tom our

The Music of Abbie Betinis

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36 As a slow walk, ♩ = 54

T
8
tu - it,

T2
8
tu - it tu - woo,___ tu - it tu - woo,.

B
p
Oo... Oo...

B2
p
Oo... Oo... Oo...

41

S
p
hoo hoo

A
p
hoo hoo hoo

T
8
tu - it, tu - it,

T2
8
tu - it tu - woo,___ tu - it tu - woo,.

B
Oo... Oo...

B2
Oo... Oo...

45 *mp* *p*

S When - e - ver our spi - rit is sleep - less

A When - e - ver our spi - rit is sleep - less

T tu - it, tu - it,

T2 tu - it tu - woo, tu - it tu - woo,

B Oo... Oo... Oo...

B2 Oo... Oo...

50 *mp* *cresc.*

S When - e - ver we're sleep - less,

A When - e - ver we're sleep - less,

T tu - it, tu - it, tu -

T2 tu - it tu - woo, tu - it tu - woo,

B Oo... Oo...

B2 Oo... Oo...

54 *cresc.*

S share, _____ share _____ us, share _____ us, share _____ us

A share, _____ share _____ us, share _____ us, share _____ us,

T it, tu - - - it, tu - - - it, tu -

T2 tu - it tu - woo, _____ tu - it tu - woo, _____

B Oo... Oo... Oo...

B2 Oo... Oo... Oo...

58 *f*

S stars _____ to out - line a land - mark _____ tree _____

A share _____ us stars _____ to out - line a land - mark _____ tree _____

T it, tu -

T2 *mf* tu - it tu - woo, _____ tu - it tu - woo, _____ tu - it tu - woo, _____ tu - it tu - woo,

B *mf* Oh... Oh...

B2 *mf* Oh... Oh...

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72

S teach_____ oh teach_ our feet_____ to feel for the

A teach_____ our feet_____ to feel for the

T it, tu - it, tu -

T2 tu - it tu - woo,_____

B Oo... Oo...

B2 Oo... Oo... Oo...

mf

76

S *f* ground_____ where brave,_____ brave___ souls_____

A *f* ground_____ where brave,_____ brave___ souls_____

T it, tu - it,

T2 *mf* tu - it tu - woo, tu - it tu - woo, tu - it tu - woo,_____

B *mf* Oo... Oo... Oo...

B2 *mf* Oo... Oo... Oo...

p

S
 - have walked — be - fore us. — (be - fore us...) —

p

A
 - have walked — be - fore us. — (be - fore us...) —

p

T
 tu - it, tu - it,

p

T2
 tu-it tu - woo, — tu-it tu - woo, — 2

p

B
 Oo... Oo... Oo...

p

B2
 Oo... Oo...

86

solo
 hoo³ hoo³ aw aw aw tu - it tu - woo,
 tu - it, tu - it,

86

pp

S
 hoo

pp

A
 - hoo

T
 tu - it, tu - it,
 tu-it tu - woo, 2

8

B
 Oo... Oo...

pp

B
 Oo... Oo...

Mysteriously, ♩ = c. 92

89 *p* *cresc.* *mf*

S God of owls, of owls, and of all,

A God of owls, God of owls, and of all, all

T 8 God of owls, God of owls, and of all, all

B *p* *cresc.* *mf*
 God of owls, God of owls, and of all, all

As a slow walk, ♩ = 54

sub p

94

S all night crea - tures,

A -

T 8 (add Alto II, optional) *p*
 tu - it,

T2 8 *p*
 tu - it tu-woo, tu - it tu - woo,

B *p*
 Oo...

B2 *p*
 Oo...

97

solo

97 *mf*

S walk al - so with us who

A *mf*

walk al - so with us who

T

tu - it, tu - it, tu -

T2

tu - it tu - woo, 2 tu - it tu - woo, 2

B

Oo... Oo...

B2

Oo... Oo...

The image shows a page of a musical score for 'God Of Owls' by Abbie Betinis. It features seven vocal parts: Solo, Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), Tenor 2 (T2), Bass (B), and Bass 2 (B2). The Solo part is marked 'solo' and has a measure number of 97. The Soprano and Alto parts are marked 'mf' and have lyrics 'walk al - so with us who'. The Tenor part has lyrics 'tu - it, tu - it, tu -'. The Tenor 2 part has lyrics 'tu - it tu - woo, 2 tu - it tu - woo, 2'. The Bass and Bass 2 parts have lyrics 'Oo... Oo...'. The score includes musical notation with notes, rests, and dynamic markings. A large watermark 'COPYING IS PROHIBITED' is visible across the page.

101

solo

tu - it tu - woo,

S
101
fear

A
fear

T
8
it, tu - it, tu - it, tu - it, tu - it, tu - it, tu -

T2
8
tu - it tu - woo, tu - it tu - woo,

B
Oo...

B2
Oo... Oo...

104

S
mf fp
the dark. solo: hoo³

A
mp pp
hoo

T
8 2
it, tu - it, hoo

B
mp pp
Oo... hoo

Selected Choral Works by Abbie Betinis:

Aililiú, ó Íosa	soprano, countertenor, SATB chorus, bodhran, gaelic harp, vielle	Abylon Press AB-036-00
Another Sky	SSA, marimba	Abylon Press AB-012-00
The Babe of Bethlehem (arr.)	SSAATTB a cappella	Abylon Press AB-031-01
Blessed Be the Lord, My Rock	SAB a cappella/organ	Graphite Publishing GP-B004
Carmina mei cordis I. Aeterna lux divinitas II. Angele dei	SATB a cappella	Abylon Press AB-030-00
Dormi, Jesu	SATB a cappella	Abylon Press AB-007-00
Hail, Christmas Day! (a canon)	SATB (or SAB) a cappella	Abylon Press AB-026-C3
In a Far Judean City	SATB a cappella	Abylon Press AB-009-C1
Jerusalem Luminosa	SA a cappella	Kjos Cat. No. 6323
The Piper's Son	SA children's choir, flute	Abylon Press AB-014-00
Prayer for Peace	SATB a cappella, soprano solo	Abylon Press AB-033-C4
Psalm 126 – A Song of Ascents	SATB a cappella	Augsburg Fortress 0-8006-7720
To the Evening Star	SSAATTB, flute	Abylon Press AB-040-00
Toward Sunshine, Toward Freedom I. The Bees' Song II. A noiseless patient spider III. Envoi	SATB a cappella, soprano solo	Abylon Press AB-035-01
Yhinx: An Ancient Greek Love Charm	TTBB a cappella, TTB soli	Abylon Press AB-018-01

ABBIE BETINIS (b. 1980) has written music in a variety of genres, but her greatest passion is for the human voice, as evidenced by her continually expanding catalogue of works for solo, chamber, and mixed vocal ensembles. Since graduating from St. Olaf College in 2001, she has received over thirty commissions for new work, from organizations such as the American Suzuki Foundation, Cantus, the Dale Warland Singers, Ensemble of the North, Kantorei (Denver, CO), The Rose Ensemble, The Schubert Club, and the University of Minnesota Men's Choir. Betinis has spent two summers on scholarship from the European American Musical Alliance at La Schola Cantorum and the Ecole Normale de Musique in Paris, France, where she studied harmony and counterpoint in the tradition of Nadia Boulanger with faculty from Juilliard and the Paris Conservatory. Originally from Stevens Point, Wisconsin, she now lives in Minneapolis, where she is completing her Master of Arts degree in music composition at the University of Minnesota, and working as a freelance singer, music copyist, and web designer. In September 2005, she was named a composer-in-residence for The Schubert Club in Saint Paul, MN.