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ARVO PÄRT AT TWILIGHT

Dean Rader

—*Ocean Beach, San Francisco*

*I. Kyrie*

Unto the end, O lord,

unto the end.

Drink up the darkness and

recommence this:

our unlocked hour.

Night's measure:

caesura of distance and longing.

The fat oboe of moon

quarter-notes the same sound;

our hearts,

your little records,

stuck on the same prayer.

*II. Gloria*

Who,

if you were to cry out,

would hear you amidst the drown of

sea-crash and skin song?

Down here

our skullcaps of malefact

and washout

let nothing—

not excelsis,

not the clock's fingersnaps,

not even your roll call—

slip past our earbuds.

*III. Credo*

And the body,  
    strung like a cello  
                    across time's fingerboard  
            believes in its own music, believes  
                    in hammering through  
the great rest:  
                    Score of vestige and lineament,  
                                    score of sun-scrim,  
score of mercy sought and mercy attained, we wait  
    like singers struck dumb  
                                    for the final tenuto.

*IV. Sanctus*

Undertow of strings.  
                    Coda our chorus  
    back to this beached world.  
                                    Stars candle out across  
    the sea of heaven—  
                                    waves metronome in,  
                    marking arrival and resurrection.  
*Twilight of the mortals*  
                    doesn't have the same zip  
    and yet, here you are,  
    lone pilgrim to absence and afterflow.  
Our voices  
    sing down the sun like they always have  
                    and always will.  
You ask again:  
    what dark pit opens  
                    beneath the ocean's fathomed stage?  
  
    [*silence begets silencio*]  
  
    O choir of exhumation,  
                                    call me up.

*V. Agnus Dei*

He who comes before

the great conductor  
brings an offering  
of ossia and catgut.

*Miserere nobis*, maestro,  
our instruments are out of tune.

Mercy's cup overturneth,  
as we overturn those whose sins we swallow:  
How do we tell dismissal  
from obstruction?

*VI. Ite missa est*

In the beginning, O lord,

in the beginning:  
unlocked moon, caesura of exhumation.

Our skullcaps strung  
like a violin of sun-scrim,  
our hearts drown in sea-crash  
and skin-song.

Night's undertow and mercy's tenuto  
candle up into absence and lineament.

Go, it is the dismissal:

Pilgrim of this breached world,

recommence our hearts:  
vestige of mercy, record of  
longing and malefact,  
we sing up  
our fathomed prayer, our offering of silver and washout—  
final music of obstruction  
and resurrection.

O distance,

O silent measure,  
drink down the body:  
drink down time's cup.