April 8–9
7:30 PM
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF DALLAS

April 10
7:30 PM
MOODY PERFORMANCE HALL
How To Go On
DALE TRUMBORE (B. 1987)

How
However Difficult
To See It
Relinquishment
Requiescat
Knowing the End
Sometimes Peace Comes
When at Last

The Branch Will Not Break
CHRISTOPHER CERRONE (B. 1984)

Lying in a Hammock at William Duffy's Farm in Pine Island, Minnesota
Two Horses Playing in the Orchard
Two Hangovers, Number One
From a Bus Window in Central Ohio,
Just Before a Thunder Shower
Having Lost My Sons, In Confront The Wreckage Of The Moon: Christmas, 1960
Two Hangovers, Number Two:
I Try to Waken and Greet the World Once Again
A Blessing

VERDIGRIS ENSEMBLE
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR ▼
SAM BRUKHMAN
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ▼
KEITH LATHROM

SOPRANOS ▼
JULIE STRAUSER, ADRIENNE PEDROTTI, MARTHA HAYES, SARAH WALSH

ALTOS ▼
JACKI MILLER, SUSEY WOODRUFF, RACHEL LERBERG, KATE BISHOP

TENORS ▼
GARRETT KHESTINEJAD, MICHAEL ALONZO, LEONARDO QUINTANA, MARCOS OCHOA

BASSES ▼
CONNOR ALLISON, DEAN WILLIS, ALEX BUMPAH, TIM JOHNSON

FLUTE ▼
MARGARET FSICHER

CLARINET ▼
CASTINE HOFMEISTER

HORN ▼
KIRSTIN SCHULARICK

TROMBONE ▼
JACOB MUZQUIZ

PERCUSSION ▼
JOSE UZCATEGUI

PIANO ▼
HANNAH PAYNE

VIOLINS ▼
MONICA RODRIGUEZ DE LA HOZ, JIAZHI ZHANG

VIOLA ▼
BRENTON CALDWELL

CELLO ▼
GAYANE MANASJAN
Following the death of a loved one, poet Barbara Crooker asks, “How can we go on, knowing the end of the story?” Secular requiem How to Go On answers this question in eight movements that range from questioning and doubt (“How”) to introspection (“Relinquishment”) to an acceptance of mortality (“When at Last”).

Threading solo voices in and out of the choral texture, How to Go On asks how we confront our own mortality after a loss, and how, in the face of that knowledge, we bring quiet grace back into our daily lives. Ultimately, this work finds beauty, catharsis, and solace in the words of three living poets: Crooker, Amy Fleury, and Laura Foley.

How to Go On was commissioned by Choral Arts Initiative (Brandon Elliott, director) and premiered on July 16, 2016 in Anaheim, California. This piece is recorded on Choral Arts Initiative’s debut album How to Go On: The Choral Works of Dale Trumbore, which also features Trumbore’s works In the Middle, Lodestar, and After the Storm Passes.
HOW
How can we go on, knowing the end of the story?

HOWEVER DIFFICULT
However difficult you think it might be, it is yours, this life, even the failures are yours, even the garden, though it be unkempt, is yours.

TO SEE IT
We need to separate to see the life we’ve made. We need to leave our house where someone waits for us, patiently, warm beneath the sheets. We need to don a sweater, a coat, mittens, wrap a scarf around our neck, stride down the road, a cold winter morning, and turn our head back, to see it—perched on the top of the hill, our life lit from inside.
—Laura Foley

RELINQUISHMENT
I am looking at pale blue ponds of melted ice on a frozen river and in them perfect clouds passing. Wind sends ripples along the water and trees cut sharp lines into the sky. Soon it will be gone, all of it and I will be sitting in darkness, sitting by a dark window, glad for having seen this earth, her elegant grace, how she turns away from the sun. And I will be learning, again, how to give it all up by simply turning. How to give it up to darkness, all you love. All of it. How to give it up again and again.
—Laura Foley, from Syringa, 2007.
REQUIESCAT
Let us go, let go with the few roots
you have left clinging to this earth,
pull free, like the clean snap of a carrot
or radish, let us go, shake off this dirt,
let go, let go of your family, their story
hasn’t been told, yours is already written,
let go of the world, its sweetness and sorrow,
let go of your friends, we will cry, yes,
but we will not forget you, let go,
let go your fierce will and stubbornness,
it served you well, now let it go,
your courage will remain, let your daughters
become women, your husband lie in his bed of pain,
your long journey is over, theirs is beginning,
let us go, become spirit and light, spring rain,
fly away from this prison of bone, let go,
wait for us, we’ll talk again later,
I am here by the phone, waiting for the call,
for this long suffering to be over,
let it go, your work is done,
soon we will bring you to the river,
bring your ashes to the current, let them flow free,
earth, fire, cinders, rain, wait for us
on the other side of the river, let us go.

—Barbara Crooker,

KNOWING THE END
How can we go on, knowing the end
of the story?

—Barbara Crooker,
excerpt from “Some Fine Day,”

SOMETIMES PEACE COMES
Sometimes peace is like this:
endless and gentle and soft
and no compulsion to go
anywhere. And even the fire
you walked through,
even the trail of ashes
is gone, not even a memory
in your heart, and even the sun is still,
unmoving and quiet,
and you have stepped into
a place beyond time,
beyond sadness and form.

A wide, high plain
where in the endless, deep silence
you find out what it is, what it is,
and your part in it.

—Laura Foley

WHEN AT LAST
When at last I join the democracy of dirt,
a tussock earthed over and grass healed,
I’ll gladly conspire in my own diminishment.
Let a pink peony bloom from my chest
and may it be visited by a charm of bees, who will then
carry the talcum of pollen
and nectar of clover to the grove where they hive.
Let the honey they make be broken
from its comb, and release from its golden hold,
on to some animal tongue, my soul.

—Amy Fleury,
When I was asked by the Milwaukee-based Present Music to create a new work for their annual Thanksgiving concert, I have to admit I was initially without ideas. I was raised on the East Coast of the US, and while I have celebrated Thanksgiving most of my life, the holiday always carries a melancholic air with it: I associate Thanksgiving with returning home—and in doing so, returning to a place that has somehow lost the luster and joy of my childhood. None of this initially seemed appropriate for a Thanksgiving concert in the midwest.

Around that same time, I discovered the poetry of James Arlington Wright, and in particular his book from 1963, *The Branch Will Not Break*. The poems frequently cite Wright’s explorations of his native midwest, and I began to connect my own visits home on Thanksgiving with Wright’s trips to South Dakota, Ohio, and Minnesota.

In my own composition, I began teasing a story out of Wright’s poems. The piece begins with an unadorned and even pulse, an insouciant waiting conjured by the wistful ‘Lying in a Hammock at William Duffy’s Farm in Pine Island, Minnesota’. Soon two men sing a plaintive melody, ending with the devastating conclusion of that poem.

But as I was composing, a secondary, more optimistic narrative emerged, one of communion with nature. I have been lucky enough to visit the midwest in recent years—particularly Wisconsin and Minnesota—and have been awed by its vast beauty. Wright, too, seems to draw inspiration from these landscapes. ‘Two Horses Playing in the Orchard’ is optimistic, joyous, if a little sad, with the very sentiment ‘Too soon, too soon’ repeated ad infinitum in my setting.

So the narrative of the piece goes, lurching from the melancholy of ‘Two Hangovers’ and ‘Having Lost My Sons, I Confront The Wreckage Of The Moon: Christmas, 1960’ to the quiescent joy of ‘From a Bus Window in Central Ohio, Just Before a Thunder Shower’ and finally ‘A Blessing’. In ‘A Blessing’, I tried to imagine Wright moving away from his despair and towards a more optimistic narrative. It’s been suggested that ‘Lying in a Hammock’ was inspired by Rilke’s famous adage: ‘You must change your life.’ Similarly, I hope the piece traces an attempt of both the author and the composer to do just that.

*The Branch Will Not Break* was mostly composed at the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire. I must give them special thanks for aiding in the creation of this work. The work was completed in Brooklyn and at the American Academy in Rome. Special thanks go to Sarah Goldfeather, Timo Andres, Kate Maroney, Chad Kranak, Eliza Bagg, and Jonathan Woody for their assistance in workshopping the piece.

‘LYING IN A HAMMOCK AT WILLIAM DUFFY’S FARM IN PINE ISLAND, MINNESOTA’,
‘FROM A BUS WINDOW IN CENTRAL OHIO, JUST BEFORE A THUNDER SHOWER’,
AND ‘HAVING LOST MY SONS, I CONFRONT THE WRECKAGE OF THE MOON:
CHRISTMAS, 1960’ FROM THE BRANCH WILL NOT BREAK © 1963 BY JAMES WRIGHT.
REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION OF WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY PRESS.
TWO HANGOVERS, NUMBER ONE

I slouch in bed.
Beyond the streaked trees of my window,
All groves are bare.
Locusts and poplars change to unmarried women
Sorting slate from anthracite
Between railroad ties:
The yellow-bearded winter of the depression
Is still alive somewhere, an old man
Counting his collection of bottle caps
In a tarpaper shack under the cold trees
Of my grave.
I still feel half drunk,
And all those old women beyond my window
Are hunching toward the graveyard.
Drunk, mumbling Hungarian,
The sun staggers in,
And his big stupid face pitches
Into the stove.
For two hours I have been dreaming
Of green butterflies searching for diamonds
In coal seams;
And children chasing each other for a game
Through the hills of fresh graves.
But the sun has come home drunk from the sea,
And a sparrow outside
Sings of the Hanna Coal Co. and the dead moon.
The filaments of cold light bulbs tremble
In music like delicate birds.
Ah, turn it off.

FROM A BUS WINDOW IN CENTRAL OHIO,
JUST BEFORE A THUNDER SHOWER

Cribs loaded with roughage huddle together
Before the north clouds.
The wind tiptoes between poplars.
The silver maple leaves squint
Toward the ground.
An old farmer, his scarlet face
Apologetic with whiskey, swings back a barn door
And calls a hundred black-and-white Holsteins
From the clover field.

LYING IN A HAMMOCK AT WILLIAM DUFFY’S FARM
IN PINE ISLAND, MINNESOTA

Over my head, I see the bronze butterfly,
Asleep on the black trunk,
Blowing like a leaf in green shadow.
Down the ravine behind the empty house,
The cowbells follow one another
Into the distances of the afternoon.
To my right,
In a field of sunlight between two pines,
The droppings of last year’s horses
Blaze up into golden stones.
I lean back, as the evening darkens and comes on.
A chicken hawk floats over, looking for home.
I have wasted my life.

TWO HORSES PLAYING IN THE ORCHARD

Too soon, too soon, a man will come
To lock the gate, and drive them home.
Then, neighing softly through the night,
The mare will nurse her shoulder bite.
Now, lightly fair, through lock and mane
She gazes over the dusk again,
And sees her darkening stallion leap
In grass for apples, half asleep.
Lightly, lightly, on slender knees
He turns, lost in a dream of trees.
Apples are slow to find this day,
Someone has stolen the best away.
Still, some remain before the snow,
A few, trembling on boughs so low
A horse can reach them, small and sweet:
And some are tumbling to her feet.
Too soon, a man will scatter them.
Although I do not know his name,
His age, or how he came to own
A horse, an apple tree, a stone.
I let those horses in to steal
On principle, because I feel
Like half a horse myself, although
Too soon, too soon, already. Now.
A BLESSING

Just off the highway to Rochester, Minnesota,
Twilight bounds softly forth on the grass.
And the eyes of those two Indian ponies
Darken with kindness.
They have come gladly out of the willows
To welcome my friend and me.
We step over the barbed wire into the pasture
Where they have been grazing all day, alone.
They ripple tensely, they can hardly contain their hap-
piness
That we have come.
They bow shyly as wet swans. They love each other.
There is no loneliness like theirs.
At home once more,
They begin munching the young tufts of spring in the
darkness.
I would like to hold the slenderer one in my arms,
For she has walked over to me
And nuzzled my left hand.
She is black and white,
Her mane falls wild on her forehead,
And the light breeze moves me to caress her long ear
That is delicate as the skin over a girl’s wrist.
Suddenly I realize
That if I stepped out of my body I would break
Into blossom.

HAVING LOST MY SONS, I CONFRONT THE WRECKAGE OF THE MOON:
CHRISTMAS, 1960

After dark
Near the South Dakota border,
The moon is out hunting, everywhere,
Delivering fire,
And walking down hallways
Of a diamond.
Behind a tree,
It lights on the ruins
Of a white city
Frost, frost.
Where are they gone
Who lived there?
Bundled away under wings
And dark faces.
I am sick
Of it, and I go on
Living, alone, alone,
Past the charred silos, past the hidden graves
Of Chippewas and Norwegians.
This cold winter
Moon spills the inhuman fire
Of jewels
Into my hands.
Dead riches, dead hands, the moon
Darkens,
And I am lost in the beautiful white ruins
Of America.

TWO HANGOVERS, NUMBER TWO:
I TRY TO WAKEN AND GREET THE WORLD ONCE AGAIN

In a pine tree,
A few yards away from my window sill,
A brilliant blue jay is springing up and down, up and down,
On a branch.
I laugh, as I see him abandon himself
To entire delight, for he knows as well as I do
That the branch will not break.
Known for his visionary creativity and artistic excellence, Sam Brukhman brings innovative programming, creative collaboration, and musical sensitivity to his programs. As the founding Artistic Director of the Verdigris Ensemble, Brukhman gathers the best local and out-of-state talent to form a world-class choral ensemble committed to bringing dynamic choral music to the modern audience.

Dallas Morning News said, “[Anthracite Fields] was a powerful experience Monday night, and an impressive accomplishment for a young conductor, Brukhman, and the choral ensemble he founded only two years ago.” D Magazine said, “Brukhman and his ensemble show themselves to be forward-thinking, interested in taking choral music to new places. The performance was, for many reasons, in its foray into a realm otherworldly and full of grief, transformative.” TheaterJones said, “The 24 voices and six instrumentalists, conducted with sweeping waves of pathos by Verdigris’ Artistic Director Sam Brukhman.”

Previous conducting positions include Arts District Chorale, Capital Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Institute of Napa Valley, Theatre Aspen, Princeton Girlchoir, and Vox Mousai Women’s Choir. In 2017, Brukhman was chosen as an interest session presenter for the Missouri Choral Directors Association on creative concert programming. A graduate of Westminster Choir College, he was also selected as a semifinalist for the ACDA National Conducting Competition in 2015.

In 2013, Sam served as an assistant conductor of the Orchestra Institute of Napa Valley under Festival Del Sole. He was also the principal Russian translator for the Russian National Orchestra and led sectionals with Orchestra Institute students under principal instrumentalists’ direction in the Russian National Orchestra. He worked with Martin West, Ming Luke, Aleksei Bruni, Vladislav Lavrik, and Maxim Rubtsov.

As a classically trained tenor, Brukhman performed orchestras like the Philadelphia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Vienna Chamber Orchestra, and the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra under conductors Yannick Nezet-Seguin, Vladimir Jurowsky, Alan Gilbert, and Jacques Lacombe. Brukhman currently sings with choral ensembles in Dallas, including the Church of the Incarnation, Highland Park Chorale, and Incarnatus.
Verdigris Ensemble brings audiences new and exciting experiences through thoughtful and themed programming of choir music. The ensemble's 16 singers have been hailed as "the crème de la crème of the area's professional choral voices" (Scott Cantrell, Dallas Morning News). However, the artistry doesn’t stop there. Verdigris collaborates with local and national performing arts organizations and musicians to elevate their performances.

Verdigris’s performances have ranged from Texas Premieres to World Premieres. Texas Premieres include Anthracite Fields by Julia Wolfe with Bang on a Can, Voices of Change, and the SOLUNA Festival. World Premieres include Dust Bowl by Anthony Maglione presented by AT&T Performing Arts Center Elevator Project featuring choreographed staging, a bluegrass band, and projections. Verdigris has also collaborated with local dance organizations. These include a Dia De Los Muertos program with Anita N. Martinez Ballet Folklorico and cultural artist Ofelia Faz-Garza and David Lang’s The Little Matchgirl Passion with Avant Chamber Ballet. Verdigris Ensemble recently collaborated with Pegasus Contemporary Ballet for their premiere performance.

Outside of performances, Verdigris Ensemble provides free voice lessons to the choir students of W.E. Greiner Exploratory Arts Academy in South Dallas. This initiative aims to give underprivileged and underrepresented kids a fair chance to audition into Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts.

Lessons continued through the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing the number of accepted students from W.E. Greiner from one in 2019 to eight in 2021. This lesson program has expanded to include students at the Yvonne A. Ewell Townview Center, many of whom graduated from Greiner.

Born from the struggles of COVID-19, Verdigris recorded Betty’s Notebook by Nicholas Reeves, commissioned and premiered in 2018, and released it as the first programmable music NFT on the blockchain. Separated into a Maste and four Stems, one for each musical layer in the recording, owners can change the state of the music as they please. The recording was produced by Anthony Maglione and mixed by Grammy Award-Winning producer Tre Nagella. Verdigris worked with Emmy Award-Winning artist Brian Brinkman to create artwork that changes with the four Stem layers to visualize these changes.

If you think that a choral concert consists of a group of singers on risers singing a range of music from uninteresting to esoteric, passing through wonderful on occasion, then you haven’t seen Verdigris Ensemble.

-GREGORY SULLIVAN ISAACS, THEATER JONES
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Based on total giving from April 1, 2021 to April 7, 2022.