

A misty forest scene with tall trees and sunlight filtering through the canopy. The image is dark and atmospheric, with a soft glow of light coming from the right side, creating a sense of depth and mystery. The trees are tall and thin, with some evergreen branches visible in the foreground. The ground is covered in dense, green undergrowth.

Late Air
Music by John Harbison

KENDRA COLTON, SOPRANO

Mirabai Songs (1982)

1	It's True, I Went to the Market.....	2:55
2	All I Was Doing Was Breathing.....	2:57
3	Why Mira Can't Go Back to Her Old House.....	2:13
4	Where Did You Go?.....	2:18
5	The Clouds.....	2:57
6	Don't Go, Don't Go.....	3:55

Kendra Colton, soprano | Kayo Iwama, piano

from After Hours

7	Like Spring (2007).....	2:45
8	Sleepsong (At the Brook with Goldberg) (2003).....	0:49
9	Baseline Ballad: Why Does Love Run Dry? (2003).....	3:33

Kendra Colton, soprano | Sanford Margolis, piano

North and South (2002)

North and South, Book I

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11	Late Air.....	1:51
12	Breakfast Song.....	3:59

North and South, Book II

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Kendra Colton, soprano | Kayo Iwama, piano

Crossroads (2012)

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17	Twilight.....	6:34
18	Refrain.....	0:33
19	Primavera.....	2:29
20	Refrain.....	0:35
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Kendra Colton, soprano | Peggy Pearson, oboe

Oberlin Contemporary Music Ensemble

Timothy Weiss, conductor

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Violin 2: Christine Showalter, Esder Lee, John Cummins

Viola: Julian Sawhill, Emilia DeLeo

Cello: Aaron Wolff, Angelique Montes

Bass: Noëlle Marty

About the Composer

One of America's most distinguished artistic figures, **JOHN HARBISON** (b. 1938) is the recipient of numerous awards, among them a MacArthur Fellowship and a Pulitzer Prize. He has written music for most of America's premier musical institutions, including the Metropolitan Opera, Chicago Symphony, Boston Symphony, New York Philharmonic, and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. His music is widely recorded on leading prestige labels.

Harbison's catalog is anchored by three operas, seven symphonies, 12 concerti, a ballet, six string quartets, numerous song cycles and chamber works, and a large body of sacred music that includes cantatas, motets, and orchestral-choral works. He has served as composer in residence with the Pittsburgh Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the American Academy in Rome, and numerous festivals.

Harbison earned degrees from Harvard and Princeton universities before joining the faculty of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He has taught at Tanglewood since 1984, serving as head of the composition program from 2005 to 2015. With Rose Mary Harbison, he has been co-artistic director of the annual Token Creek Chamber Music Festival since its founding in 1989. He is also principal guest conductor at Emmanuel Music. An accomplished jazz pianist, Harbison founded MIT's Vocal Jazz Ensemble in 2010, and he is the pianist with the faculty jazz group Strength in Numbers (SIN).

Harbison is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. His music is published exclusively by Associated Music Publishers.



About the Artists

KENDRA COLTON's versatility is demonstrated in repertoire from Baroque opera and oratorio to contemporary music. The American soprano appears regularly in recital, chamber music settings, and as a soloist with symphony orchestras. She has worked with conductors Bernard Haitink, Christopher Hogwood, Sir Neville Marriner, Nicholas McGegan, Seiji Ozawa, and Helmuth Rilling, and for presenters including the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Cleveland Orchestra, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Her singing has been described as "touchingly musical" (*New York Times*) and "skillful and imaginative" (*Boston Globe*). *Opera News* wrote that Colton sings "with beauty, brightness and poise."

Colton has developed a niche in the oratorio and sacred works of Bach, Handel, Mozart, Haydn, Schubert, Mendelssohn, and Brahms. Acclaimed not only for her performances of Handel and Mozart operas, she is recognized as an interpreter of contemporary chamber music and has premiered and recorded numerous works. Pieces specifically composed for her voice include *Finite Infinity* for soprano, oboe, and piano by Peter Child and two works by Andy Vores: *Uncertainty is Beautiful* for soprano and chamber orchestra and *The Reckless Heart* for soprano and piano.

A daughter of professional musicians, Colton began her life in music as a pianist. Her love of singing and passion for the art song repertoire developed simultaneously with her piano studies at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, where she and pianist Kayo Iwama first collaborated. She earned graduate performance degrees in singing and piano at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. Colton serves on the voice faculty at Oberlin.

American pianist **KAYO IWAMA** has concertized extensively with Dawn Upshaw, Lucy Shelton, and Christòpheren Nomura. She has performed in top venues throughout North America, Europe, and Japan including the Walter Reade Theater at Lincoln Center, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, Kennedy Center, Ravinia, Tokyo's Yamaha Hall, and the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris. *The Washington Post* called her a pianist "with unusual skill and sensitivity to the music and the singer," and *The Boston Globe* praised her "virtuoso accompaniment...super-saturated with gorgeous colors."

Iwama is associate director of the Graduate Vocal Arts Program at the Bard College Conservatory of Music, where she works in tandem with artistic director Dawn Upshaw. Since 1995 she has taught at the Tanglewood Music Center, where she is coordinator of the Vocal Studies Program. There she has assisted maestros James Levine, Seiji Ozawa, and Robert Spano in major operatic and concert productions. She is a former resident of the Boston area, where she was a frequent performer in addition to serving as pianist and music director of the critically acclaimed Cantata Singers Chamber Series, for which she created programs devoted to rarely heard art song and vocal chamber music.

Iwama holds degrees from Oberlin Conservatory and the State University of New York at Stony Brook, where she studied with Gilbert Kalish. She can be heard on the Well-Tempered label, with baritone Christòpheren Nomura in Schubert's *Die Schöne Müllerin*, and on two ISMM discs devoted to French melodies and the songs of Robert Schumann with tenor Ingul Ivan Oak.

Oboist **PEGGY PEARSON** is a winner of the Pope Foundation Award for Outstanding Accomplishment in Music. She has performed solo, chamber, and orchestral music throughout the United States and abroad. As solo oboist with the Emmanuel Chamber Orchestra, she has performed all of the cantatas of Johann Sebastian Bach. According to *The Boston Globe*, "Peggy Pearson has probably played more Bach than any other oboist of her generation; this is music she plays in a state of eloquent grace."

Pearson is the founding artistic director and oboist of Winsor Music Inc., a founding member of the chamber group La Fenice, and a member of the Bach Aria Group. She has toured internationally and recorded extensively with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and has appeared with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and the Orchestra of St. Luke's as principal oboist. She has also performed with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and Music from Marlboro. An active exponent of contemporary music, Pearson was a fellow of the Radcliffe Institute in contemporary music and premiered numerous works, many of which were written for her. She also organized the Winsor Music Consortium (a project to commission works for oboe) and has premiered more than 20 works on her chamber music series.

Pearson has been on the faculties of SongFest, Tanglewood Music Center, Bach Institute, Boston Conservatory, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, Wellesley College, Composers Conference at Wellesley College, and the Longy School of Music of Bard College. She is a member of the faculty of the Bach Institute, a collaboration between Winsor Music, Emmanuel Music, and Oberlin College.

A fixture on the Oberlin Conservatory piano faculty from 1972 through 2015, **SANFORD MARGOLIS** is known for his broad versatility and ability to slide easily between styles. In addition to his command of the classical repertoire, he has played jazz professionally for many years, as well as with klezmer, Latin, and country and western groups. He has collaborated as a concerto soloist with several orchestras under the direction of Antal Doráti, Stanisław Skrowaczewski, David Zinman, Robert Spano, and Arthur Fiedler, among others. His work can be heard on a Naxos/American Classics recording of works by George Frederick McKay. Margolis holds the title professor emeritus of piano. He is also a former instructor of Yiddish at Oberlin.

Conductor **TIMOTHY WEISS** has earned critical acclaim for his performances and bold programming throughout the United States and abroad. His repertoire in contemporary music is vast and fearless, including master works, very recent compositions, and an impressive number of premieres and commissions. He has been a recipient of the Adventurous Programming Award from the League of American Orchestras.

For more than two decades, Weiss has directed the Oberlin Contemporary Music Ensemble, elevating the group to a level of artistry and virtuosity in performance that rivals the finest new music groups. Recent conducting engagements have included Orchestra 2001 in Philadelphia, Eastman Broadband Ensemble, BBC Scottish Symphony, Britten Sinfonia in London, International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), and the Melbourne Symphony in Australia.

A committed educator, Weiss is a professor of conducting and chair of the Division of Contemporary Music at Oberlin Conservatory, where he helped create and mentor the ensembles Eighth Blackbird and ICE. He also serves as a faculty member and conductor of the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble at the Aspen Music Festival and School, and he is music director of the Arctic Philharmonic Sinfonietta in Bodø, Norway.

The **OBERLIN CONTEMPORARY MUSIC ENSEMBLE** (CME) has served as a fertile training ground for scores of powerhouse new music performers and groundbreaking ensembles, including the multiple Grammy Award-winning sextet Eighth Blackbird and the International Contemporary Ensemble. In performances throughout the academic year, CME performs music of all contemporary styles and genres, from minimalism to serialism, and from electronic to cross genre, mixed media, and beyond.

Under the direction of Timothy Weiss, CME has collaborated with many prominent composers from a variety of backgrounds, including Stephen Hartke, George Crumb, Harrison Birtwistle, Helmut Lachenmann, David Lang, Joan Tower, Frederic Rzewski, and Vijay Iyer, among many others. CME premieres works by prominent Oberlin faculty, student, and alumni composers, as well as distinguished guests. It regularly tours the United States, with performances in recent years taking the ensemble to the Brooklyn Museum, Winter Garden, Miller Theatre, Merkin Concert Hall, Harvard University, Benaroya Hall, Palace of Fine Arts, Chicago's Ganz Hall, and Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall. The ensemble also performs numerous partner concerts with the Cleveland Museum of Art.



Notes and Texts

MIRABAI SONGS

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Texts by Mirabai. Translations by Robert Bly, Red Ozier Press (1980).

Mirabai's ecstatic religious poetry was written in 16th-century India. When she was 27, her husband was killed in a war. Mirabai refused to die on her husband's funeral pyre, as was the custom. Instead, she left her family compound, wrote her poems to Krishna, the Dark One, and sang and danced them in the streets. —John Harbison

It's True I Went to the Market

My friend, I went to the market and bought the Dark One.
You claim by night, I claim by day.
Actually I was beating a drum all the time I was buying him.
You say I gave too much; I say too little.
Actually I put him on the scale before I bought him.
What I paid was my social body, my town body, my family body, and all my inherited jewels.
Mirabai says: The Dark One is my husband now.
Be with me when I lie down; you promised me this in an earlier life.

All I Was Doing Was Breathing

Something has reached out and taken in the beams of my eyes.
There is a longing, it is for his body, for every hair of that dark body.
All I was doing was being, and the Dancing Energy came by my house.
His face looks curiously like the moon, I saw it from the side, smiling.
My family says: "Don't ever see him again!" And imply things in a low voice.
But my eyes have their own life; and they know whose they are.
I believe I can bear on my shoulders whatever you want to say of me.
Mira says: Without the energy that lifts mountains, how am I to live?

Why Mira Can't Go Back to Her Old House

The colors of the Dark One have penetrated Mira's body; all the other colors washed out.
Making love with the Dark One and eating little, those are my pearls and my carnelians.
Meditation beads and the forehead streak, those are my scarves and my rings.
That's enough feminine wiles for me. My teacher taught me this.
Approve me or disapprove me: I praise the Mountain Energy night and day.
I take the old ecstatic path. I don't steal money, I don't hit anyone. What will you charge me with?
I have felt the swaying of the elephant's shoulders; and now you want me to climb on a jackass?
Try to be serious.

Where Did You Go?

Where did you go, Holy One, after you left my body?
Your flame jumped to the wick, and then you disappeared and left the lamp alone.
You put the boat into the surf, and then walked inland, leaving the boat in an ocean of parting.
Mira says: Tell me when you will come to meet me.

The Clouds

When I saw the dark clouds, I wept, O Dark One, I wept at the dark clouds.
Black clouds soared up, and took some yellow along; rain did fall, some rain fell long.
There was water east of the house, west of the house; fields all green.
The one I love lives past those fields; rain has fallen on my body, on my hair, as I wait in the open door for him.
The Energy that holds up mountains is the energy Mirabai bows down to.
He lives century after century, and the test I set for him he has passed.

Don't Go, Don't Go

Don't go, don't go. I touch your soles. I'm sold to you.
Show me where to find the bhakti path, show me where to go.
I would like my own body to turn into a heap of incense and sandalwood and you set a torch to it.
When I've fallen down to gray ashes, smear me on your shoulders and chest.
Mira says: You who lift the mountains, I have some light, I want to mingle it with yours.

FROM AFTER HOURS

Like Spring, text by Murray Horwitz
Sleepsong (At the Brook with Goldberg), text by John Harbison
Baseline Ballad: Why Does Love Run Dry?, text by Murray Horwitz

"Written in the margins" is the way I would characterize a lot of my composing. In an effort to keep a natural, intuitive relationship to everything I write, I often think even of large projects as "written in the margins"—that is, growing spontaneously and insistently. The 32 songs in After Hours are a collection of about a third of the pieces I've written in the margins of the margins. The songs fall into four loose categories: pop songs, theater songs, novelty songs, and near-art-songs. After a few high school love songs (sort of like the poems you sent to your girlfriend), the lifelong habit began with an invitation in 1971 to write an entire "comeback album" for a well-known singer (the album, and the comeback, never materialized). A half-dozen of those have lyrics by my sister, Meg Harbison. For the more recent ones, I wrote the tunes first and depended on the divining instincts of my lyricists. Performance of songs like these must always be an imaginative act, involving a skilled, observant arranger or an inventive, wisely framing pianist, introducing and filling out the song. —Harbison

Like Spring

They can tell me that it's raining cats and dogs.
They can smell the fireplace with its burning logs.
They can say there's snow, and soon we'll Christmas eve-it.
I don't have to believe it.

It's warm. It's spring.
It's time to laugh and sing.
All the morning bells are pealing.
And I'm feeling like a king.

You're here. You're there.
I see you ev'rywhere.
And I see that you've
become my everything.

The sky's a brilliant blue—
The bluebirds too—
A gorgeous hue!
They sing for you
A tune
That's warm
Like June.

It's true. It's cold.
December is old.
But the love you've
brought won't stop
Making me sing.
Just like it's spring.

Sleepsong (At the Brook with Goldberg)

When I can't sleep there's a trick I try
it's a Golden Rule that cannot lie.
A bass repeats with a shifting change,
a move that's simple to arrange.
It's a pattern I recommend,
a sound you take with you to the end.
Try this bass and then add a tune—
I'm sure that you'll be sleeping soon

Baseline Ballad: Why Does Love Run Dry?

I try to see what happened,
I try to understand,
Why do people cry?
Why does love run dry?
Now words don't seem to matter,

Emotion's out of hand
Like a sultry east wind blowing,
sowing just sand.
If only we had thought a minute,
No, we just got caught up in it.
So shall we call it quits,
all at wit's end?
Or could we find a new thing
Prosaic but a true thing
That we're destined for?
Is there something more?

The breathless thrill is leaving,
The passion starts to fade.
So is this our fate?
Is it just too late?
Or is there something lasting
some stronghold that we made
underneath a castle
crumbling, tumbling, decayed?
Could be that we're still onto something
see—seems we're still fond of something
Free and more rational.
Passion'll fade
If dreams turn into seeing,
And wishing into being,
If we both can give,
Maybe love can live.

NORTH AND SOUTH (SIX POEMS BY ELIZABETH BISHOP)

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North and South (*Six Poems by Elizabeth Bishop*) is a cycle of six settings of poems composed between 1995 and 1999. It is divided into two books, each of similar proportion. Book One, dedicated to Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, begins with the first of Bishop's four Songs for a Colored Singer. In an interview with Ashley Brown, Bishop said, "I was hoping someone would compose the tunes for them. I think I had Billie Holiday in mind. I put in a couple of big words because she sang big words well....As for music in general; I'd love to be a composer." After this rhetorical opening comes a setting of a typically elusive love-and-loneliness Bishop incantation, "Late Air." The text of the third song, "Breakfast Song," was not published. It was transcribed, in progress, by Lloyd Schwartz during a visit to Bishop while she was in the hospital. —Harbison

North and South, Book I:

Ballad for Billie I from Songs for a Colored Singer

A washing hangs upon the line,
but it's not mine.

None of the things that I can see
belong to me.

The neighbors got a radio with an aerial;
we got a little portable.

They got a lot of closet space;
we got a suitcase.

I say, "Le Roy, just how much are we owing?
Something I can't comprehend,
the more we got the more we spend..."
He only answers, "Let's get going."
Le Roy, you're earning too much money now.

I sit and look at our backyard
and find it very hard.
What have we got for all his dollars and cents?
—A pile of bottles by the fence.
He's faithful and he's kind,
but he sure has an inquiring mind.
He's seen a lot; he's bound to see the rest,
and if I protest

Le Roy answers with a frown,
"Darling, when I earns I spends.
The world is wide; it still extends...
I'm going to get a job in the next town."
Le Roy, you're earning too much money now.

Late Air

From a magician's midnight sleeve
the radio-singers
distribute all their love-songs
over the dew-wet lawns.
And like a fortune-teller's
their marrow-piercing guesses are whatever
you believe.

But on the Navy Yard aerial I find
better witnesses
for love on summer nights.
Five remote red lights
keep their nests there; Phoenixes
burning quietly, where the dew cannot climb.

Breakfast Song

My love, my saving grace,
your eyes are awfully blue.
I kiss your funny face,
your coffee-flavored mouth.
Last night I slept with you.
Today I love you so
how can I bear to go
(as soon I must, I know)
to bed with ugly death
in that cold, filthy place,
to sleep there without you,
without the easy breath
and nightlong, limblong warmth
I've grown accustomed to?
—Nobody wants to die;
tell me it is a lie!
But no, I know it's true.
It's just the common case;
there's nothing one can do.
My love, my saving grace,
your eyes are awfully blue
early and instant blue.

North and South, Book II:

Ballad for Billie II from Songs for a Colored Singer

The time has come to call a halt;
and so it ends.
He's gone off with his other friends.
He needn't try to make amends,
this occasion's all his fault.
Through rain and dark I see his face

across the street at Flossie's place.
He's drinking in the warm pink glow
to th'accompaniment of the piccolo.*

The time has come to call a halt.
I met him walking with Varella
and hit him twice with my umbrella.
Perhaps that occasion was my fault,
but the time has come to call a halt.

Go drink your wine and go get tight.
Let the piccolo play.
I'm sick of all your fussing anyway.
Now I'm pursuing my own way.
I'm leaving on the bus tonight.
Far down the highway wet and black
I'll ride and ride and not come back.
I'm going to go and take the bus
and find someone monogamous.

The time has come to call a halt.
I've borrowed fifteen dollars fare
and it will take me anywhere.
For this occasion's all his fault.
The time has come to call a halt.

**jukebox*

Song

Summer is over upon the sea.
The pleasure yacht, the social being,
that danced on the endless polished floor,

stepped and side-stepped like Fred Astaire,
is gone, is gone, docked somewhere ashore.

The friends have left, the sea is bare
that was strewn with floating, fresh green weeds.
Only the rusty-sided freighters
go past the moon's marketless craters
and the stars are the only ships of pleasure.

“Dear, My Compass...”

Dear, my compass
still points north
to wooden houses
and blue eyes,

fairy-tales where
flaxen-headed
younger sons
bring home the goose,

love in hay-lofts,
Protestants, and
heavy drinkers...
Springs are backward,

but crab-apples
ripen to rubies,
cranberries
to drops of blood,

and swans can paddle
icy water,

so hot the blood
in those webbed feet.

—Cold as it is, we'd
go to bed, dear,
early, but never
to keep warm.

CROSSROADS

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Crossroads, for soprano, oboe, and strings, was co-commissioned by Apple Hill Center for Chamber Music, La Jolla Music Society SummerFest, and Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, with additional support from the Atlanta Chamber Players, Blair School of Music-Vanderbilt University, Chamber Music Amarillo/Harrington String Quartet/Amy Goeser Kolb, Chamber Music Northwest, Chesapeake Chamber Music, Network for New Music, Oberlin Conservatory, Orchestra of St. Luke's, San Francisco Symphony, Serenata of Santa Fe, Texas Tech University School of Music, and Winsor Music.

*This piece represents my third musical encounter with Louise Glück's poetry. When Glück published *A Village Life* in 2009, I noticed a new direction: The book seemed to originate in a community, in which isolation was both ameliorated and more deeply experienced, something like what I register in Leopardi's poems. I wanted to engage with these poems partly to add voice to this new direction, to affirm it, and to find whatever new compositional skills it required. Each of the three settings is preceded by the same refrain, which I took to be a location, the community norm, from which the music can depart. —Harbison*

Twilight

All day he works at his cousin's mill,
so when he gets home at night, he always sits at this one window,
sees one time of day, twilight.

There should be more time like this, to sit and dream.

It's as his cousin says:

Living—living takes you away from sitting.

In the window, not the world but a squared-off landscape
representing the world. The seasons change,
each visible only a few hours a day.

Green things followed by golden things followed by whiteness—
abstractions from which come intense pleasures,
like the figs on the table.

At dusk, the sun goes down in a haze of red fire between two poplars.
It goes down late in summer—sometimes it's hard to stay awake.

Then everything falls away.

The world for a little longer

is something to see, then only something to hear,
crickets, cicadas.

Or to smell sometimes, aroma of lemon trees, of orange trees.

Then sleep takes this away also.

But it's easy to give things up like this, experimentally,
for a matter of hours.

I open my fingers—

I let everything go.

Visual world, language,
rustling of leaves in the night,
smell of high grass, of woodsmoke.

I let it go, then I light the candle.

Primavera

Spring comes quickly: overnight
the plum tree blossoms,
the warm air fills with bird calls.

In the plowed dirt, someone has drawn a picture of the sun
with rays coming out all around
but because the background is dirt, the sun is black.
There is no signature.

Alas, very soon everything will disappear:
the bird calls, the delicate blossoms. In the end,
even the earth itself will follow the artist's name into oblivion.

Nevertheless, the artist intends
a mood of celebration.

How beautiful the blossoms are—emblems of the resilience of life.
The birds approach eagerly.

Crossroads

My body, now that we will not be traveling together much longer
I begin to feel a new tenderness toward you, very raw and unfamiliar,
like what I remember of love when I was young—

love that was so often foolish in its objectives
but never in its choices, its intensities.
Too much demanded in advance, too much that could not be promised—

My soul has been so fearful, so violent:
forgive its brutality.
As though it were that soul, my hand moves over you cautiously,

not wishing to give offense
but eager, finally, to achieve expression as substance:

it is not the earth I will miss,
it is you I will miss.

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MIXING AND MASTERING: Paul Eachus

GRAPHIC DESIGN: Ryan Sprowl

ACTING DEAN OF THE CONSERVATORY: William Quillen

Crossroads recorded November 4 and 6, 2016; all other songs recorded May 21-23, 2018; in Clonick Hall at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music.





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