



COLLEGE OF MUSIC

# University of North Texas College of Music

Senior Recital | Monday, February 6, 2023 | 8:00 pm | Voertman Hall

## Beige Cowell, composer

### Music, Magic, & the Queer Experience

Hilfstefna (2023) ..... Beige Cowell (b. 2001)

Völva - Anna Schmelter

Galdrakona 1 - Abby Gonzalez, Anna Schmelter

Galdrakona 2 - Teagan Serink, Danielle Harrington

Galdrakona 3 - Izzy Urroz Arena, Ris Kemp, Diane Tiscareño

Encant (2021) ..... Beige Cowell

I. The Siren's Song

II. The Hulder's Song

Siren Vocalist - Julian Yanas

Hulder Vocalist - Danielle Harrington

Sankta Lucia (2022) ..... Beige Cowell

I. Natt

II. Morgon

III. Dag

Conductor - Julian Yanas

Soloist - Anna Schmelter

Sopranos - Danielle Harrington, Rachel Moes, Anna Poole

Altos - Kara Bonordan, Anna Schmelter, Savanna Singleton,

Helena Vassiliades

Tenors - Caleb Aguirre, Samuel Benavidez, Craig Smith, Nate Taylor

Basses - PJ Mooney, Findlay Morton, Cameron Purcell

Klar bäck (2022) ..... Beige Cowell

I. Back to Nature

II. Unafraid

III. We Must Leave Them Behind

Voice and Frame Drum - Helena Vassiliades

Harp and Frame Drum - KT Pagone

Janessa (2023) ..... Beige Cowell (b. 2001)  
Helen Lundy, violin • Anthony Orr, clarinet  
Mark Sierra, acoustic guitar • PJ Mooney, accordion  
Heather Pryse, percussion

Vem kian segla (2022) ..... Beige Cowell  
PYXIS Saxophone Quartet  
Ronald Bonitatibus, soprano • Max Windsor, alto  
Devon Isaac, tenor • Beige Cowell, baritone

Sunrise Vivace (2022) ..... Beige Cowell  
rev. 2022 saxophone quartet  
PYXIS Saxophone Quartet  
Ronald Bonitatibus, soprano • Max Windsor, alto  
Devon Isaac, tenor • Beige Cowell, baritone

Parting Glass - Finale (2023) ..... Beige Cowell  
All Performers and Audience

### **Hilfstefna (Old Norse)**

Vér stefna á valds grund,

Vér skokull á valds himinn,

Vér leita snjallræði af vár moeðr

Smíða songr

Vér standa á valds grund,

Vér þakka á valds himinn,

Vér soffin vár moeðr

Vér fylla fjolkyngi á galdrakona

### **Blessing/Summons of Protection**

We call upon the powers of the Earth,

We harness the power of the sky,

We seek counsel from our foremothers

To shape this song (spell)

We rest the powers of the Earth,

We thank the power of the sky,

We lay down our foremothers (ancestors)

We seal the magic of the songwitches

### **Encant**

#### **I. The Siren's Song**

Hear my call from the deep. Join me in your desire.

From the foam and on the shore we will meet in your heart.

Tell me what you dream of when you hear my voice.

Soft betrayal of your kind with eyes for me, your life is mine.

#### **II. The Hulder's Song**

I grow a lovely garden deep with the woods. The fog brings dangerous mornings but my cottage stays withstood. Yes, I grow a lovely garden, some wander to its rows. They see my crystal blossoms and the flowers that I grow. Come join me. Come join me. My garden awaits. A wanderer like you will fit into my hiding place.

I have the reddest roses. More perfect than you've seen. They climb along my lattice and sway gently with the breeze. When the tinker's son came over he stole a rose and lied. So I made a rope of thorns and now he hangs above the tide.

Come join me. Come join me. My garden awaits. A wanderer like you will fit into my hiding place.

I grow a vibrant Monk's hood with pretty purple blooms. It grows along a tall stalk with malice in its roots. A farmer's son came calling, and he thought that he'd kiss me. So I baked a loaf with buds and set the Queen of Poisons free.

Come join me. Come join me. My garden awaits. A wanderer like you will fit into my hiding place.

I have a deadly Nightshade. So twisted does it grow. With berried black as midnight and a skull as white as snow. The vicar's cocky young son came to drink my tea. He touched me without asking now he's buried 'neath a tree. Come join me. Come join me. My garden awaits. A wanderer like you will fit into my hiding place.

## **Sankta Lucia**

### **I. Natt**

Natten går tunga fjät, Natten går

kring jord som sol förgät, solen  
glömmor

skuggorna ruva.

Då i vårt mörka hus,  
stiger med tända ljus,  
Sankta Lucia, Sankta Lucia!

### **II. Morgon**

Sankta Lucia, hör oss  
Morgonens Helgon  
Natten går stor och stum,  
nu hörs dess vingar,  
i alla stilla rum,

Sankta Lucia, befria oss  
Se hur vår tröskel står!  
vitklädd med ljus i hår,  
Morgonens Helgon är här.

### **III. Dag**

Sankta Lucia, så hon ett underbart  
ord till oss talar.

Flykta snart ur jordens dalar,

Mörkret flykta snart  
Dagen åter ny, Mörkret flykta!

Tala! Tala med oss!  
stiga ur rosig sky, tala med oss ur  
rosig sky

Sankta Lucia, Sankta Lucia!

## **Klar bäck (Clear Creek)**

### **I. Back to Nature**

I've played my part in Life's affairs  
I'm weary of the noise and strife  
So let me put aside my cares  
and live the quiet simple life.  
I love to dwell in forest wild  
Where giant pine trees pierce the sky  
A beauty spot where nature smiled  
A fitting place to live and die

## **Santa Lucia**

### **I. Night**

Night walks with a heavy step, the  
night goes by

As the sun departs from earth, the  
sun forgets

Shadows are brooding.

There in our dark house,  
Walking with lit candles,  
Saint Lucia, Saint Lucia!

### **II. Dawn**

Saint Lucia, hear us  
The Saint of the Dawn  
Night walks grand, yet silent,  
Now hear its wings,  
In every room so still,

Saint Lucia, free us  
See how our threshold stands!  
White-clad with light in her hair,  
The Saint of the Dawn is here.

### **III. Day**

Saint Lucia, so she speaks wonderful  
words to us.

Flee soon from the valleys of the  
Earth,

The darkness shall flee soon.  
The day is new again, escape the  
darkness!

Speak! Speak to us!  
Rise from the rosy sky, speak from  
the rosy sky

Saint Lucia, Saint Lucia!

## II. Unafraid

I have no fear of this things called Death.  
When the body goes back to the Earth,  
and I breathe the last bit of breath  
that was breathed in my nostrils at birth.

I'm not afraid to lie down and die,  
I shall quit this old world with a smile.  
But I'm not ready to say Good-bye,  
I would like to stay here, yet a while.

## III. We Must Leave Them Behind

I ponder and marvel at Nature's great plan,  
The vast panorama She spreads before man;  
A World filled with beauty of every kind,  
Man views them awhile but must leave them behind.

There are some who forget while passing along,  
That avarice and greed are essentially wrong.  
They covet and claim the treasures they find,  
May use them awhile but must leave them behind.

So enjoy the beauties of Nature each day,  
For you like all others must soon pass away.  
The things that we love and our hearts have entwined,  
are snatched from our grasp we must leave them behind.

The beautiful things which today we behold,  
Keep their beauty forever they never grow old.  
The eyes which now see them will someday be blind,  
They'll see them no more they must leave them behind.

The pleasures of life which now hold us so fast,  
Will greet those who follow when we shall have passed.  
While Life, Death, and the Soul, three words undefined,  
Shall mystify those we are leaving behind.

## Vem kan segla (translation)

Who can sail without the wind?  
Who can row without oars?  
Who can part from their friend  
without shedding tears?  
I can sail without wind,  
I can sail without oars.  
But I cannot part from my friend  
without shedding tears.

## Parting Glass - Finale

[Verse 1]

Of all the money that e'er I had  
I spent it in good company  
And all the harm that e're I'd done  
Alas it was to none but me  
And all I've done for want of wit  
To mem'ry now I can't recall  
So fill to me the parting glass  
Good night and joy be to you all

[Verse 2]

Of all the comrades that e'er I had  
They're sorry for my going away  
And all the sweethearts that e'er I had  
They'd wish me one more day to stay  
But since it fell unto my lot  
That I should rise and you should not  
I'll gently rise and I'll softly call  
Good night and joy be to you all

[Chorus]

So fill to me the parting glass  
And drink a health whate'er befall  
I'll gently rise and I'll softly call  
Good night and joy be to you all

[Repeat Verse 1]

## Hlífstefna

In Viking Era Scandinavia, women played an important role in society via magic. This 'woman's magic' was called seiðr, a practice both feared and highly venerated, even amongst the gods. Seiðr was most often used for divination, giving prophecies of people's fortunes, harvests, and battles. In order to perform the magic, a Völva (or priestess) would gather women from the local village or those that traveled with her. These women, called galdrakona, would sing galdr, a chant-like vocal style to channel magical energies and connect with spirits.

Hlífstefna, which translates to "Blessing/Summons of Protection" is a chant song written with some of these inspirations. While galdr itself was more sonically similar to a style called kulning, here the voices merge modern and ancient characteristics to create something new. The text, an approximation of Old Norse, is written by myself as a dialogue between the singers/galdrakona and the foremothers of old.

## **Encant**

The Siren's Song is loosely based on the popularized idea of its namesake. I wanted to play with the idea of desire and the queer experience. Typically the role of the Siren is played by a hyperfeminine cisgender woman, so I deliberately wrote this movement with a lower register to evoke a genderqueer reading of the concept and to highlight the femininity that exists in everyone. While I want each of these movements to be able to be sung by any gender or gender non-conforming person, in this context, the piece is very much an exploration and acceptance of non-heterosexuality.

The Hulder's Song takes a completely different direction and is less of what one normally thinks of when they think of a siren song. The last verse of the text is a poem by Kate Holly-Clark and is referred to by her as a New-Age Girl's Skipping Rhyme. I added on the remaining verses, staying within the same sentiment of the original. In Scandinavian folklore, the Hulder is a fox-woman (sometimes cow-woman) who lives in forests and lures men to their deaths. I play off of that premise but instead make it more of a metaphor for the experiences of survivors of sexual assault, especially in historical contexts where women who were lesbians (or non-heterosexual) were persecuted as witches or forced to marry men. My interpretation gives them power over their oppressors and those who would demonize them.

## **Sankta Lucia**

Lucy of Syracuse lived from 283-304 CE. She is one of eight women, including the virgin Mary, to be explicitly commemorated in the Catholic Canon of the Mass. Her story is different depending on who you ask and where you are. Some stories claim she brought food to Christian martyrs hiding in catacombs, others say Lucia was Adam's first wife, or that she consorted with demons. For the sake of this music, I've pulled inspiration from multiple sources and let the story of Lucia take its own shape.

Lucia was born to a wealthy family in Sicily, but her father died when she was an infant, and her mother raised her alone. She was a beautiful child with eyes like gold and hair like onyx. But, even from an early age, Lucia did not desire men (or women for that matter), so she vowed to remain a virgin and dedicated her life to serving the poor. However, when she came of age, her mother found her a suitor. Lucia refused his affections time and time again, but it did nothing more than enrage the man. Because she was beautiful and wealthy, her suitor would take the girl for his wife regardless of her wishes. In an act of defiance, Lucia gouged out her lovely golden eyes, forever marring her beauty. She would never have to gaze upon the repulsive man again. But the suitor turned to the authorities, claiming Lucia was a Christian, an offense punishable by death.

It is here that most people say she died, martyred for Christ. But, the rest of us know that Lucia fled with money and her mother's blessing, traveling north, bringing food and aid and light to all those in her path. Eventually, she herself became light, and now she stands guard at the dawn, protecting her people from the darkness that lies in wait.

Sankta Lucia is celebrated on December 13th, the winter solstice in the Julian calendar. The day with the longest night welcomes evil spirits in the stretches of darkness. The light-bringer pulls the sun back into the sky, and on that morning, if you watch and listen closely, you'll see a blind woman with light in her hair, followed by the sound of singing.

## **Klar bäck**

Klar bäck, or Clear Creek in English, is named after the Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center in Denton, TX. The area is a beautiful nature reserve with a prairie of native wildflowers, a small wetland, trails, and the Clear Creek itself. I was moved by the poetry of E. F. Hayward in his collection Poems from the North Woods, so I set three poems for this song cycle.

The connection to nature that Hayward writes about, is both a very human and very magical thing. It's a sentiment at the core of the ancient Swedish practice of kulning, a feminine style of singing or herding call. I have leaned into kulning for several aspects of this piece, but in Unafraid, which is a quick but reluctant acceptance of Death, I find a spiritual dwelling that can only be expressed through the haunting, piercing, and melismatic cry of kulning.

## **Janessa**

A modern staple of folk music in Northern Europe is a song set- three melodies or songs that are strung together for dancing or listening. Scandinavia has a rich history of folk songs for fiddle, accordion, and small ensembles. Janessa is modeled after those song sets but with three newly composed tunes.

This piece is named after my dog Janessa, or "Nessy" for short. She may be older, but she doesn't let that stop her from dancing and "singing" along to various alarm clocks and higher-pitched instruments. I knew I got the piece right when she sat happily in the middle of a rehearsal in my living room.

## **Vem kan segla**

*Vem kan segla förutan vind* is one of my favorite folk songs. The original lyrics are about leaving behind someone you love, and the inevitability of the pain that accompanies that. It's a somber, bittersweet, and mournful part of the human experience. Here, I have arranged the song for the Pyxis Saxophone Quartet, and as such, it is an expression of the love, joy, and care we have for the friends we meet along the path of life. Because, you can sail without the wind, and you can row without oars, but no one can part from a friend without shedding tears. This arrangement has no vocalist, but I have included an English translation of the original text for your consideration.

## **Sunrise Vivace**

Sunrise Vivace was originally the fourth movement of my piece titled *Autobiographical String Quartet*. It was composed in the style of a shanty to pay homage to my biological father's ancestry, Irish-Norwegian. In the narrative of the larger work, this is the lively conclusion, representing a hope and joy for the future. I've arranged it here for saxophone quartet, specifically Pyxis, out of my own hubris. It seems if I have a song or tune I like well enough, I'll find any excuse to play it with my quartet-mates, who are all stunning musicians that I've had the pleasure to work with these past few years.

This small set of two songs is a sentimental nod to my journey as a saxophone player. While it now comes second to my compositional pursuits, the baritone saxophone will always be my first love.

## **Parting Glass - Finale**

Tonight, I invite you to sing along to *Parting Glass* a traditional Irish folk song arranged for all the performers in this evening's concert. Good night, and joy be to you all!