

Program Notes

Solitary

for baritone, clarinet, cello and piano

Solitary for baritone, clarinet, cello and piano, based on poetry by Hollis Robins, was commissioned by Andrew Talle. According to Robins, the poem *Solitary* is part of a sonnet sequence called "Sonnets of Imprisonment," which are all loosely about being bound either by the form or by real or psychological bars. The poet William Wordsworth considered the sonnet form both constraining and liberating; in this longer sequence Robins says that she explores the nature of formal and psychological constraints as they work together. The music attempts to capture the frame of mind of the narrator when faced by real or imaginary threats: the dreadful 'waiting' of the footsteps of the guards; the resistance to what one is "supposed to do" and the violent consequences; the 'remembrance' of 'normal' life; the foreseeable dread and inevitability of an certain future.

Solitary

by Hollis Robins

There is a furtive echo you get used to.
You spend enough time waiting for the sound
of the footsteps of the guard on midnight rounds,
it tells you that you'll do what you're supposed to.

It reminds me of the summer nights I used to
fish at night without a light to hear the sounds
of screen porch cocktail laughter drifting down
where I listened still and silent well past curfew.

It was worth it still despite the midnight beatings.

Fish helped but fishing wasn't why I went.

I wished to see how normal people spent
Their time on ordinary summer evenings.

I tended not to do what I was told to.
And the whispers told me where I would be sent.