



EMPAC

Anonymous Man

Michael Gordon

Performed by The Crossing

Conducted by Donald Nally

THU / MAR 22 / 7:30

The Crossing

Katy Avery
Nathaniel Barnett
Jessica Beebe
Kelly Ann Bixby
Karen Blanchard
Abigail Chapman
Colin Dill
Micah Dingler
Robert Eisentrout
Joanna Gates
Dimitri German
Steven Hyder
Michael Jones
Heather Kayan
Frank Laucerica
Chelsea Lyons
Maren Montalbano
Rebecca Myers
Daniel O'Dea
Rebecca Oehlers
James Reese
Daniel Schwartz
Rebecca Siler
Daniel Spratlan

Donald Nally, *conductor*
John Grecia, *keyboards*

Program

Anonymous Man (2017)
Michael Gordon

1. A Tale
2. I Moved
3. On Desbrosses Street
4. It's Julie Passing Through Town
5. I First Noticed Robinson
6. On That Terrible Beautiful Morning
7. One Day I Saw
8. Abraham Lincoln's Journey Down
Desbrosses Street
9. I Sleep At Home



Anonymous Man

WORDS AND MUSIC BY MICHAEL GORDON (B. 1956)

Anonymous Man was commissioned by The Crossing and conductor Donald Nally. It premiered on July 1, 2017 at the Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill, as a part of The Month of Moderns, The Crossing's annual new-music summer festival.

A NOTE FROM THE COMPOSER

When I moved into my loft on Desbrosses, the streets were empty, since few people lived there. But both then and now, there were the homeless. Over time the neighborhood changed from an industrial warehouse district to a residential area. *Anonymous Man* is a memoir about my block. The piece is built around my memories of moving in, meeting my future wife for the first time there, and conversations I have had with two homeless men who made their home on the loading dock across the street.

1. *A Tale*

This is a tale of two.
One lives inside.
The other one outside.

2. *I Moved*

I moved into the second floor of an abandoned factory at 22
Desbrosses Street in the fall of '81. The door had been left open.

The landlord circumvented New York law by renting out commercial
warehouse space
to artists looking for a place to live and work.

Outside the streets were dark and desolate. The windows rattled from the
cold and rain.
The loft was piled high with trash. I called the landlord, Mister K, but no
success.

The building had been occupied by the Romanoff Caviar Company.
The floors of my loft had been covered with waves of undulating concrete.
There were drains every six feet. I bought the Readers Digest Complete Do
It Yourself Manual,
which had a lot of practical information on building walls and things like
that.

I was playing in a band called Peter and the Girlfriends. Peter was a girl
who sang. The
Girlfriends were a bunch of guys who played guitars and drums.

We rehearsed on Desbrosses Street at night, at full volume making all the
noise we liked.

Then we'd plaster the town with posters for our show and end up at the
Market Diner.

I was in graduate school at the time and had a job at a furniture store
which sold porch swings in Manhattan. A professor from Mississippi,
on his Sabbatical year, brought up truckloads of porch swings and hired
me to run his store.

3. *On Desbrosses Street*

Ever since I've lived on Desbrosses Street there have been people living on
the street.
As long as I remember Larry, quiet and sweet, muttering, waving.

4. *It's Julie Passing Through Town*

I'm living on Desbrosses Street, it's August 1982.
The buzzer rings, I get the door,
It's Julie passing through town.

My roommate Peter said that we would like to meet,
Desbrosses Street at 10 AM.
We went to eat – Leroy's Coffee Shop, a local place now long gone.

I looked in her eyes and saw blue green light streaming by, alluring,
confiding, aspiring.
Up on the fire escape grating, we spent the day sailing through dense
conversations.

We talked about Desbrosses Street, flying trapeze, Miami Beach,
arboretums, Music for Eighteen. The Bal Shem Tov. We ordered rice and
French toast.

I said you've got to meet my friend, David Lang in New Haven.
But come back to Desbrosses Street and marry me. It will be happy endings.

5. *I First Noticed Robinson*

I first noticed Robinson. He was impossible to ignore. He stood out because
he had a lot of
belongings. He spent the day moving his things within the radius of a few
blocks,
with a mysterious urgency. And at the end of each block, when his belongings
were gathered,
he would stand and read. His reading intrigued me and I started to talk to him.

I first noticed Robinson. He spent the day moving his things like Sisyphus pushing a bolder up hill. Day after day after day after day. He would tell me about the books he was reading, in English and French, history and philosophy. And at the end of each block when his belongings were gathered he would stand and read.

One day I stopped to say hello and he was reading the complete plays of Aristophanes. He gave me a quizzical look: "I thought you were a student." I ordered the volume from Amazon. A few days later I read *Lysistrata* and it all came back to me. The women of Greece end the Peloponnesian Wars by withholding sex from their men.

Not long ago I noticed that Robinson was a little uneasy: "The scaffolding's down and I will be moving." After years of renovation the building across the street was finished. And with the increase in foot traffic, the doormen and the new residential tenants, the street offers less protection. The street offers less obscurity. The street offers less anonymity.

6. *On That Terrible Beautiful Morning*

On that terrible beautiful morning we woke up early and dressed our children for school. We hurried out the door on that terrible beautiful morning. We woke up early and walked out into the light.

The sun was gleaming and on that terrible beautiful morning we woke up early and dressed our children for school. We hurried out the door on that terrible beautiful morning. We woke up early and walked down Greenwich Street.

The sun was gleaming and we stood inside the courtyard conversing, chatting on about nothing. I looked up at the sky. The sun was shining and on that terrible beautiful morning, everything ran in slow motion. Eerie hushed chaos enveloped the streets, smoke and flames pouring out above us.

7. *One Day I Saw*

One day I saw a make-shift memorial where Larry lived. The alcove he slept in was covered with flowers and candles. I was surprised the Downtown Express ran an article, "Downtowners mourn the homeless man they called Larry."

One day, in March 2007, I walked into my studio, and from the window I saw a make-shift memorial, across the street a sad tableau – flowers and candles and hand written notes, taped up on the wall by the alcove where Larry slept covered with cardboard.

"I used to bring him coffee and lunch," said Eve.
"A kindly graceful man," said Mitchell.
"A comforting familiar face," said Jordi,
"I have two kids, he would always wave to us."

8. *Abraham Lincoln's Journey Down Desbrosses St.*

The funeral cortege left Washington on Friday morning.
At every station crowds flocked to view the passing train.
In Baltimore, in Harrisburg, in Philadelphia, bells tolled and minute guns fired.

On Monday morning, in Jersey City, the coffin was lifted into the hearse.
Then, in solemn silence, the procession moved to the ferry.
On Desbrosses Street every available space was occupied, all eyes toward
the approaching
Steamer.

The glass hearse was festooned with eight large plumes of black and white
feathers.
Around the edge were American flags fastened with knots of white and
black ribbon,
drawn by six grey horses heavily draped in black; each horse led by a
groom in mourning.

9. *I Sleep At Home*

I sleep at home.
I have a bed.
I put my head on a pillow.

I have a door.
I have a closet.
My clothes are clean and folded.

I have a chair.
I can sit down.
There is a light.
I can turn it on.

I have a roof.
There is a window.
When it is raining I am dry.
When it is thundering I am wondering.

The Crossing is a professional chamber choir conducted by Donald Nally and dedicated to new music. It is committed to working with creative teams to make and record new, substantial works for choir – most often addressing social issues—with the possibility of changing the way we think about writing for choir, singing in choir, and listening to music for choir.

Highly sought-after for collaborative projects, The Crossing's first such partnership was as the resident choir of the Spoleto Festival in Italy, in 2007. Since then, collaborators include the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), American Composers Orchestra, Network for New Music, Lyric Fest, PRISM Saxophone Quartet, Beth Morrison Projects, Pig Iron Theatre Company, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Mostly Mozart Festival, National Gallery of Art, Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Cleveland Museum, Institute for Advanced Study, Carnegie Hall, National Sawdust, and Northwestern University. The Crossing holds an annual residency at the Warren Miller Performing Arts Center in Big Sky, Montana. The Crossing has presented more than 60 commissioned world premieres, including works by Michael Gordon, John Luther Adams, David Lang, Anna Thorvaldsdottir, Gavin Bryars, Ted Hearne, Caroline Shaw, David T. Little, Robert Maggio, Gabriel Jackson, Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen, and Hans Thomalla.

With a commitment to recording its commissions, The Crossing has issued 14 releases, receiving a Grammy Award for Best Choral Performance in 2018, its second nomination in as many years. The Crossing, with Donald Nally, is the American Composers Forum's 2017 Champion of New Music. They are the recipients of the 2015 Margaret Hillis Award for Choral Excellence, three ASCAP Awards for Adventurous Programming, and the Dale Warland Singers Commission Award from Chorus America.

The Crossing is represented by Alliance Artist Management.

Donald Nally is artistic director of The Crossing and the John W. Beattie Chair of Music at Northwestern University. He has served as chorus master at Lyric Opera of Chicago, Welsh National Opera, Opera Philadelphia, and, for many seasons, at the Spoleto Festival in Italy. Donald, with The Crossing, was named the American Composers Forum 2017 Champion of New Music. Collaborations include the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, National Gallery, Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Mostly Mozart Festival, Cleveland Museum of Art, National Gallery (in Osaka, Japan), Carnegie Hall, National Sawdust, Lisson Gallery London, Klockriketeatern Helsinki, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Washington National Cathedral, and Boston's Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. Donald Nally is the recipient of the 2017 Michael Korn Founders Award and the 2012 Louis Botto Award from Chorus America. His ensembles have twice won Margaret Hillis Award for Excellence in Choral Music: in 2002 with the Choral Arts Society of Philadelphia and in 2015 with The Crossing. This season he is a Resident Visiting Artist at the Park Avenue Armory.

Over the past 30 years, **Michael Gordon** has produced a strikingly diverse body of work, ranging from large-scale pieces for high-energy ensembles and major orchestral commissions to works conceived specifically for the recording studio and kaleidoscopic works for groups of identical instruments.

Transcending categorization, his music represents the collision of mysterious introspection and brutal directness. Gordon's recent works have included *Big Space*, commissioned and presented by the BBC Proms; a concert-length work for choir, *Anonymous Man*, commissioned and premiered by The Crossing, and three new works for orchestra—*Natural History*, written for the 100th Anniversary of the United States' National Parks and premiered at Crater Lake in Oregon; *Observations on Air*, a concerto for bassoon for soloist Peter Whelan, commissioned by the British ensemble The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment; and *The Unchanging Sea*, a piano concerto for Tomoko Mukaiyama with a new film by Bill Morrison.

His special interest in adding dimensionality to the traditional concert experience has led to numerous collaborations with artists in other media, most frequently with filmmaker Bill Morrison and Ridge Theater. Gordon and Morrison have also worked together on film symphonies centered on cities—Los Angeles:

Dystopia (commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic); New York City: *Gotham* (commissioned by the ACO in New York City), and Miami Beach: *El Sol Caliente* (commissioned by the New World Symphony). Gordon has been commissioned by Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, the BBC Proms, the Seattle Symphony, the Rotterdam Philharmonic, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Ensemble Modern, and the Brooklyn Academy of Music, among many others. Gordon is co-founder and co-artistic director of New York's legendary music collective Bang on a Can. His music is published by Red Poppy Music (ASCAP) and is distributed worldwide by G. Schirmer, Inc.

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