



## A Hymn to the Moon

Thou silver deity of secret night,  
Direct my footsteps through the woodland shade;  
Thou conscious witness of unknown delight,  
The Lover's guardian, and the Muse's aid!  
By thy pale beams I solitary rove,  
To thee my tender grief confide;  
Serenely sweet you gild the silent grove,  
My friend, my goddess, and my guide.  
E'en thee, fair queen, from thy amazing height,  
The charms of young Endymion drew;  
Veil'd with the mantle of concealing night;  
With all thy greatness and thy coldness too.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762)

### PROGRAM NOTES

Before I was a composer, I studied physics and computer science, was a coder, and a science teacher. So when I get a chance to combine music, math, and science, I'm all over it. "Silver Deity of Secret Night: A Love Song to the Moon" was commissioned by Cantus as part of their "One Giant Leap" concert series.

Because the mathematicians and scientists were key to the success of launching and navigating a rocket, I wanted to be sure to integrate some equations into the song. I also wanted to capture humanity's longing for the moon. When I found Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's poem "A Hymn to the Moon" I knew I would have a balance of math, science, and poetry.

At its heart, "A Hymn to the Moon" is a love poem. It touches that place in our hearts that humans have felt for millennia — our longing for this beautiful, yet cold celestial body and the idea that she often serves as companion on life's journey. As our companion, the moon has been muse, friend, and guide for many through the ages. As I was working with the poem, I was especially drawn to these lines:

By thy pale beams I solitary rove,  
To thee my tender grief confide;  
Serenely sweet you gild the silent grove,  
My friend, my goddess, and my guide.

I envisioned the astronauts alone, under the moon's pale beams, roving though space in their moonlight-gilded rocket — the emptiness, a grove of planets, stars, and star dust.

The intense drive by the mathematicians, scientists, and astronauts who made space travel a reality has always intrigued me. They were moon-dreamers. The scientists, the mathematicians, all the people on the ground at NASA, and the astronauts.

I will admit to being a moon-dreamer, myself. As preparation for writing this piece, I researched the moon, I dug into the math that was used, I watched a new CNN movie using only footage and recordings from the Apollo 11 mission, and I read the transcripts of the conversations between command control and the astronauts. This research, in the form of the Greek alphabet, my own conglomeration of radio and TV broadcasts, and a go/no go poll became a part of the composition. "Silver Deity of Secret Night" is a soundscape of luscious harmonies, interwoven with spoken text, and filled with a sense of longing, trepidation, and anticipation.



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