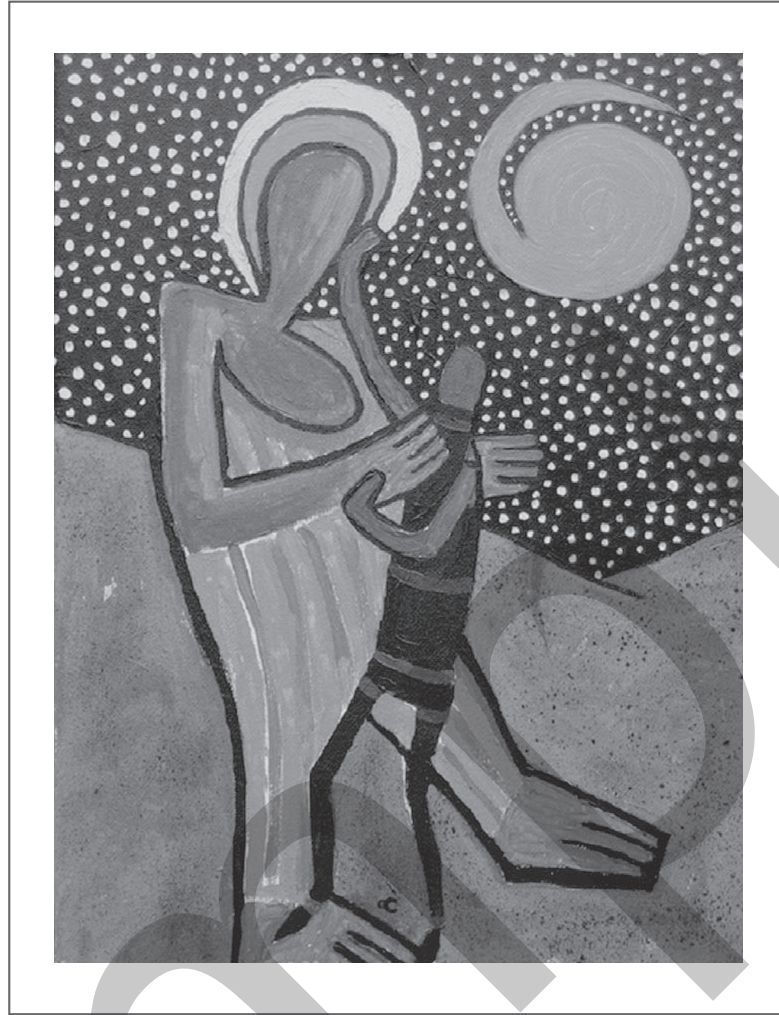


Meditation on Jacob Wrestling

Developments on Erik Routley's WOODBURY and Genesis XXXII:22-29

for Clarinet, Viola, and Piano

PAUL MACK SOMERS



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PROGRAM NOTES

Genesis XXXII:22-29

- 22 That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.
- 23 After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions.
- 24 So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak.
- 25 When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man.
- 26 Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."
- 27 The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered.
- 28 Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome."
- 29 Jacob said, "Please tell me your name."
But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there.

The score contains the chapter and verse references placed appropriately within the music as a guide to the program of the work.

Erik Routley's WOODBURY sets Charles Wesley's 1739 hymn "Come, O Thou Traveler Unknown", which concludes with the name of the stranger being "Universal Love".

PAUL MACK SOMERS (b. 1942) studied composition with Warren Benson and George Andrix at Ithaca College School of Music, and participated in master classes with Norman Dello Joio under a Ford Foundation Grant. Somers has composed theatric, vocal, choral, chamber, and orchestral music. His music has been performed in Lincoln Center, Weill Hall in Carnegie Hall, and Ars Vitalis.

Commissioners include the Bay Atlantic Symphony, Colonial Symphony, Summit Chorale, Palisades Virtuosi, Jorge Ávila, Brett Deubner, Ellen Hassman, Ron Levy, Michiko Otaki, and the Jacques Cousteau Center for Estuarine Research for a young audience work related to the ecology of the Delaware Bay. He has also composed various solo instrumental works over the years, also available on the CD "Sonatas and More". He and his wife Janet live along the Maurice River near Mauricetown, New Jersey.

A MEMORY FROM JULY, 1969

Here's the story about how I came to be one of those who gave Erik Routley's hymn-tune "WOODBURY" (named for the Iowa county in which it was composed) its first sing, over a communal breakfast in July of 1969 at Morningside College in Sioux City, Iowa. Routley and I were both part of an annual convocation of Methodist musicians from all over the United States.

It was blisteringly hot, and the dorms had no air conditioning. One solution was taken by Tom Dunn, the conductor and soon-to-be editor at E. C. Schirmer in Boston. He invited Routley and me to accompany him to an air conditioned bar overlooking the Missouri River just to stay cool while swapping stories. Routley said he'd stay behind to try to sleep. I did go along, and since I was only 27, Dunn had a lot more stories than I! He was the very definition of a raconteur. When we finally got back to the dorm, the heat was still simply awful. We found Routley walking the hall and left him at his door when he decided to try his bed again. Dunn and I each retired to our own rooms and each literally sweated it out all night.

As he told us the next morning, Routley spent too much of the hot night tossing and turning in his bed unable to sleep. He restlessly shifted around on the sheets and began to feel like Jacob wrestling with the stranger in Genesis. This, of course, put a hymnodist like him in mind of the Charles Wesley hymn "Come Thou, O Traveller Unknown". So Routley, not caring much for the hymn tune then commonly used for that text, abandoned the bedsheets for the room's desk under an open window. There, he composed a new hymn tune for the Wesley text. Wrestling with notes he found was a lot better than wrestling with the sheets.

After he was satisfied with his new tune, he made a hand-written fair copy in ink and finally got some sleep. Early in the morning he went to the school's office and ran off a bunch of duplicates on the then still newfangled "miracle critter", a Xerox® machine.

At breakfast he handed out copies of his not even five-hours-old hymn tune and the Wesley text to all the folks at the conference. We sang its premiere as a recognition that we had all somehow made it through the sweltering night, and as a grace before eating.

– Paul Mack Somers, July 2018

Meditation on Jacob Wrestling was composed as a response to various students and others who wondered about my opinion of "minimalism" – Glass, Adams, Reich, et al. I realized that I could only answer properly if I tried to compose a minimalist piece. I wrote out a bright, simple, rhythmic figure and decided to see how long it engaged me. Though I found I wasn't interested in sustaining the repetitions as long as was fashionable in minimalist circles, the opening loud, jangling piano figure did set me imagining a large caravan. I very soon realized that it was quite specifically the very wealthy Jacob and his enormous retinue coming to see his estranged brother Esau. Thus my old friend WOODBURY in its newer anthem version came to mind and, indeed, became the musical source of the motives which came to drive the subsequent *Meditation on Jacob Wrestling*. WOODBURY itself concludes the meditation in Routley's anthem version transcribed for this instrumentation.

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Meditation on Jacob Wrestling

5

Transposed Score for B \flat Clarinet, Viola, and Piano
(based on Genesis xxxii:22-29)

Duration: c. 10'

PAUL MACK SOMERS

Allegro ♩ = 78
Genesis xxxii:22

B \flat Clarinet

Viola

Piano

ff

Cl.

Vla.

Pno.

ff

Cl.

Vla.

Pno.

p

p

p

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7

Cl.

Vla.

Pno.



9

Cl.

Vla.

Pno.

mp



11

Cl.

Vla.

Pno.



13

Cl.

Vla.

Pno.

mf

mf

This system contains measures 13 and 14. The Clarinet (Cl.) part begins in measure 13 with a melodic line, moving to a more active line in measure 14. The Viola (Vla.) part has a similar melodic contour. The Piano (Pno.) accompaniment consists of dense, repeated chords in both hands. The dynamic *mf* is indicated in both the Cl. and Pno. staves.

15

Cl.

Vla.

Pno.

ff

This system contains measures 15 and 16. In measure 15, the Clarinet (Cl.) has a whole rest. In measure 16, it enters with a melodic line. The Viola (Vla.) part continues with a melodic line. The Piano (Pno.) accompaniment remains dense. The dynamic *ff* is marked in the Cl. staff.

17

Cl.

Vla.

Pno.

p

This system contains measures 17 and 18. The Clarinet (Cl.) part has a melodic line in measure 17, followed by a rest in measure 18. The Viola (Vla.) part continues with a melodic line. The Piano (Pno.) accompaniment is dense. The dynamic *p* is marked in the Cl. and Pno. staves.

19

Cl.

Vla.

Pno.

21

Cl.

Vla.

Pno.

(p)

24

Cl.

Vla.

Pno.

Maestoso ♩ = 72
Genesis xxxii:23

Maestoso ♩ = 72