

The Ascendant

Wally Gunn

Maria Zajkowski



The Ascendant songs for eight voices and drum kit
Commissioned by Roomful of Teeth

Music by Wally Gunn . December 2012 and February 2016
Text by Maria Zajkowski

The Ascendant	(31:15)
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The beginning and	(05:00)
The fence is gone	(04:45)
Through the night wave	(05:00)
What we began	(04:30)
Are we death	(05:15)
Surviving death	(06:45)

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This score current to 2016.06.15

wg@wallygunn.com
wallygunn.com

mariazajkowski@y7mail.com
mariazajkowski.com

Roomful of Teeth

Cameron Beauchamp, bass
Dashon Burton, bass-baritone
Martha Cluver, soprano
Eric Dudley, tenor
Estelí Gomez, soprano
Avery Griffin, baritone
Caroline Shaw, alto
Virginia Warnken, alto
Brad Wells, conductor and artistic director
roomfulofteeth.org

with
Jason Treuting, drums

Thanks to

Maria Zajkowski
Barbara White and Princeton Sound Kitchen
Brad Wells and Roomful of Teeth
Jason Treuting
Dan Trueman
Jesse Lewis
Trevor Litsey
Peter Mehlin
David Degge and Abby Rix Degge
Terrence Hunt

The beginning and

by the last tree in the last summer
on the hill where the last sun falls
on the things that at last mean

we are finally unwound
from the hollow arrow
around which we have spun
our ignorant lives

we leave the first last
to wait inside the darkness
where the black snow falls
like the last bird

The fence is gone

The fence is gone,
we are starting to see
our nudity through the branches,
the pumping berries
pinned to our hearts,

I've forgotten if you are me
or I'm you.
We switched bags somewhere.
I have to rummage through
the palings in the yard
for the knothole that used to
show me how to see the world.

I can't frame you in it now
or detect from these piles
of decrepit fence what was
so important that for so long
it needed to be kept in.

Through the night wave

a hand becomes every hand
a hole becomes a home
a place to forget
the ascendant has left
a face in the dark
is what it faces
the glass forest
in all of your lives
the rope around
day and night
into death I am
repeating the unsayable

What we began

when we began we began
I sent myself back but we never
did look into that cloud

there is too much desire to forget
what a waste we can and can't be

tonight apart looks like
what won't be itself in the light

Are we death

are we death now
can we hope at last
that this blue morning has become us
finally there is nothing to believe
coming after us
placing its steps in ours
 through the dew
free of the urging heart
free of the curse of hair and eyes
are we at last on the mountain
we have so long been under
the tunnel that was a song
is it over
the irritability of being ourselves
the plain fact of being dumb
are we at last over it
can we now be final
final like memory
final like stars
final like mornings
all over again

Surviving death

Every day, surviving death,
 we send out our horses.
They don't come back.

Here the dry river's
 a place not to camp,
the night a place not to be.

An army gathers rattling its pans,
 thinking of home,
an army that will turn your head

to a fire in the sand where those
who've survived this wait out of time

in the dust and the gold,
with the horse you thought was gone.

– Maria Zajkowski

The Ascendant

The beginning and

A ♩ = 110

2

3

4

Estelí Soprano

Martha Soprano

Caroline Alto

Virginia Alto

Eric Tenor

Avery Baritone

Dashon Baritone

Cameron Bass

Drum Set

Crosstick

Kick

mp

B Lightly

6

7

8

E Sopr

M Sopr

C Alto

V Alto

single vowel (no diphthong)
hold each note full duration
sharp glottal stops

mp

E Ten

oh · oh__ oh · oh oh · oh__ oh · oh oh · oh__ oh · oh oh · oh oh · oh oh · oh__ oh ...

A Bari

D Bari

C Bass

Dr.

9

10

11

12

E Sopr
 M Sopr
 C Alto
 V Alto
 E Ten
 A Bari
 D Bari
 C Bass
 Dr.

single vowel (no diphthong)
 hold each note full duration
 sharp glottal stops
mp
 oh - oh__ oh - oh oh - oh__ oh -

Musical score for 'The Ascendant' featuring Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass staves. The score includes lyrics and musical notation for the Tenor and Bass parts. The Tenor part has lyrics: 'oh - oh__ oh - oh oh - oh__ oh -'. The Bass part has lyrics: 'oh - oh__ oh - oh oh - oh__ oh -'. The score is divided into measures 9, 10, 11, and 12.

13

14

15

(2nd
time
only)*f*

E Sopr
 M Sopr
 C Alto
 V Alto
 E Ten
 A Bari
 D Bari
 C Bass
 Dr.

by the

oh oh - oh oh - oh oh - oh oh - oh oh - oh oh ...

single vowel (no diphthong)
 hold each note full duration
 sharp glottal stops
mp

oh - oh oh - oh oh - oh oh - oh oh - oh oh - oh oh - oh oh - oh oh - oh oh - oh oh

C 17 18 19 20 21

E Sopr
last tree in the last sum - mer on the

M Sopr
last tree last sum - mer

C Alto
last tree last sum - mer

V Alto
last tree last sum - mer

E Ten
8

A Bari
...

D Bari
...

C Bass
mf ah ah

Dr.

22 23 24 25 26 27

1.

E Sopr
hill where the last sun falls by the

M Sopr
hill last sun falls mm

C Alto
hill last sun falls mm

V Alto
hill last sun falls mm

E Ten
8

A Bari

D Bari

C Bass
ah ah ah mm

Dr.