

POTENTIA

Poem written by Anne Carmack

Commissioned by Orchestra Santa Monica (OSM), 2024

This is the performance version of the poem used in the piece *Potentia* composed by Jason Anthony Gomez. OSM Music Director/Conductor, Roger Kalia, led the world premiere performance on Feb 16, 2025 with Jubilant Sykes featured as baritone/narrator.

First Movement

I have arrived

I am here
Pulled down and pushed out
My mother is lovely
Earth and skin
My distant kin is watching

Bright lights, not blinding
I see everything
Strong hands hold me
And roll me around
I am cold now
I am alone
So loud
So many sounds

My father calls me something new
I know it's my name
Forward, forward, now forever
I cannot go back the way I came
This is a love song

Second Movement

I am up now and on my feet
I am going
I am free
I have wandered away from any hand that tries to hold me

Something calls me
I have to go
I am afraid
And I am brave

It is dark but not yet black
The door is closed
I can't turn back

Look at this
Look around
Can you hear that?
Different sounds
Morning birds and tv bombs

Why are they crying?
What do they see?
Someone is coming
looking for me

Nature versus nurture
No one really knows for sure
I showed up here with skin on
not scales or bark or fur

This is a story
I am a pen
I am making marks on everything
All of the women
All of the men
So many books
So much to learn

I am victorious
It is my turn
I make the map and blaze the trail
But tomorrow they will tell me
that again - *again* - I've failed

Third Movement

Broken

Please don't leave me
I cannot do this without you
It is over
They have forgotten
There is no way I'll make it through
I do not need you
Believe me
What I am telling you is true

This burden hurts
This ache, this pain
This place is tearing me apart
I have so many questions and no answers

Life has got me on my knees.

A helpful hand
A hopeful word
A prayer, a new philosophy
another desperate creed

Send help and send it fast
I am empty
I am greedy
I am hungry and in need
Your hands
Your teeth
Your honest eyes
The whole cathedral of your being
Can I trust the words that you are whispering?
Can I believe what I can't see?

It is a boy
It is a girl
It is my masterpiece
It is my world

Grow

Your turn to go now
I am tired
I have too many choices
And I am running out of time
I am a warrior
I am too weak to move
What is real?
What is my mind?

I am worried and I am frozen
No more than skin and bones
I can't afford it
Or go without it
I am always on my own

The World is ending

Fourth Movement

Good morning
Some good news!
It was hard, but not the end
I've got enough now -
More than enough now -
To give away
To spare
To lend

Power

Too soon
Too soon
They came to bury you
Weeping, crawling, stumbling
I had to carry you to your grave

Time passes

While all of the everything is happening
While I am out running
And on the roam
I am flying
Now I am falling
I do not want this
Please take me home

Habits, heartbreak, holding on too tight
Rage and chains
Love and hate
Fire and fortune
Fight, fight, fight!
Turn up the music
No more fear
The good champagne - We did it!
Cheers!

One hundred thousand heartbeats
Just to get us through the day
Just be thankful
I know the way

Stop
Slow down
Too fast
Too loud
I am nothing
I am different
I am beautiful and proud
I am everything
And so are you
But it is time to go again
I really hope I'll see you soon

Fifth Movement

Respect and reverence
Courage, miracles and awe
Broken bones and memories
More than fifty thousand laws

Sirens on the backroads
and the cold dark city streets
Hands up - don't shoot
I want my mother
I've tried to tell you
I can't breathe

Sixth Movement

Sick

I am fighting
I'm still trying
Will this heal after it bleeds?
Can they cure the thing that's come to kill me?
Can I count on all of my good deeds?

Wait

I hear hard laughter
coming from another room
My eyes are open
I am still breathing
I am awake with all of you
Another chance
with more to say
with more to give
with more to do

Wildflowers and good people
All of us pushing up through mud
Two hundred billion trillion stars
The warm sun dropping down at dusk
Another day, another moon
Another summertime for us

I am dancing
I am sleeping, dreaming big and making moves
I am keeping and releasing
I still have so much more to prove
I am putting flowers at the feet
of everything you do

Relief

We are light now
We are right now
Exactly where we are supposed to be
Come closer
Can you hear me?

Tell me quickly
Can you see?

Thank you
I am sorry
I have loved you
All is forgiven
We are free
Goodbye

I have arrived