

Gerald Cohen

Amid the Alien Corn
(Ruth and Naomi)

For soprano, mezzo-soprano, and piano

Text by E. Louise Beach
(2019)

PERUSAL SCORE

Program Note:

Amid the Alien Corn (Ruth and Naomi) is the setting of a poetic canticle by E. Louise Beach, based on the first chapter of the biblical Book of Ruth. Naomi is returning to the land of Judah after living in Moab, having left Judah 10 years before because of a famine there. In that time she has seen her two sons marry Moabite women, and then experienced the death of her husband and both sons. She plans to return to Judah alone, but her daughter-in-law Ruth expresses her love and loyalty for Naomi and her people, and persists in her requests to leave her native land and accompany Naomi to Judah.

E. Louise Beach, in her poem, expands on the spare biblical text, deepening the emotional relationship between the two women as they experience this crucial moment in their lives. As a composer, I cherished the opportunity to create, in this short dramatic and lyrical scene, vocal characters for these two strong and empathetic women.

Amid the Alien Corn (Ruth and Naomi) was commissioned by E. Louise Beach, and dedicated to her mother, and to her daughters. The premiere was given in May 2022 by Ilana Davidson, soprano; Heather Johnson, Mezzo-soprano; and Alexandra Joan, piano at a concert of my compositions at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City.

—Gerald Cohen

PERUSAL SCORE

her mother, and to her daughters

Text: E. Louise Beach

Amid the Alien Corn (Ruth and Naomi)

Music: Gerald Cohen

Fast, agitated ♩ = 200 (♩ = 100)

Ruth (Soprano)

Naomi (Mezzo)

Piano

pp

Use half-pedal throughout this passage, for a slightly covered sound, rather than completely dry.

6

Ruth

Naomi

Pno.

p

11

Ruth

Naomi

Pno.

cresc.

f

16

Ruth

Naomi

Pno.

dim.

21

Ruth

Naomi

Pno.

SOPRANO (as narrator):
mp

MEZZO (as narrator): In a for-mer time, _____
mp (Bring out Mezzo line as main melody)

In a for-mer time, _____

mp *pp*

27

Ruth

Naomi

Pno.

in an an-cient place, _____

in an an-cient place, _____

p

34

Ruth
hard-ship and fa-mine wracked the land. (Bring out Soprano line In - stead of as main melody)

Naomi
hard-ship and fa-mine wracked the land. In - stead of

Pno.

40

Ruth
wheat, grim this - tles _____ thrived. Corn cock - le in - stead of

Naomi
wheat, grim this - tles _____ thrived. Corn cock - le in - stead of

Pno.

46 *mf*

Ruth
bar - ley. Na - o - mi and her hus-band with _____ their two

Naomi
bar - ley. Na - o - mi and her hus-band with _____ their two

Pno. *mf*

52

Ruth
sons left their home ___ for they were starv - ing. Left Ju-dah for ___ the

Naomi
sons left their home ___ for they were starv - ing. Left Ju-dah for ___ the

Pno.
mp

59

Ruth
mea-dows of Mo - ab.

Naomi
mea-dows of Mo - ab.

Pno.
p *cresc.*

65

Ruth
mp *cresc.*
O - ver time the sons mar - ried wo - men of Mo - ab.

Naomi
mp *cresc.*
O - ver time the sons mar - ried wo - men of Mo - ab.

Pno.

70 *f* *dim.*
 Ruth But then God ga-thered in death both hus-band
 Naomi But then God ga-thered in death both hus-band *dim.*

Pno. *f*

ped
 (Let pedal ring all notes until lift sign)

78 *p*
 Ruth and sons. Be-lo-ved men, but they
 Naomi and sons. Be-lo-ved men, but they

Pno. *p*

84 *f*
 Ruth pe-rished too young.
 Naomi pe-rished too young.

Pno. *f* *mp*

89

Ruth

Naomi

Pno.

cresc. poco a poco

95

Ruth

Naomi

Pno.

101

Ruth

Naomi

Pno.

ff

107

Ruth

Naomi

Pno.

114

Ruth

Naomi

Pno.

SOPRANO (as Ruth): *Slower, lamenting* ♩ = 100

MEZZO (as Naomi): *p*

dim.

This is how things are: _____

This is how things are: how

p *sempre legato*

ped. Let Ped. blur the texture

121

Ruth

Naomi

Pno.

Wives no more. We wan - der

things are: Wives no more, no more. We wan - der

ped.

128

Ruth
shoe - less on shards of woe that cut and prick and wound and

Naomi
shoe - less on shards of woe that cut and prick and wound and

Pno.

128

Reo. Reo. Reo.

134 *mf*

Ruth
nick,

Naomi
nick, shards wound

Pno.

134 *mf* *subito p* *p* *p*

Reo. 6 * Reo. 6 * Reo. 6 *

138

Ruth

Naomi
p
Old me - mo - ries

Pno.

138 *p* *p*

Reo. 6 * Reo. 6 * Reo. 6 * Reo. 6 *

140 *p*

Ruth like dag - gers and darts that

Naomi stab us

Pno. *Ped. simile*

142

Ruth scratch and nip

Naomi and notch our

Pno. *cresc.*

144 *mf*

Ruth Old me - mo - ries of

Naomi hearts. Old me - mo - ries of

Pno. *mf*

147

Ruth
selves once ten - dered.

Naomi
selves once ten - dered.

Pno.

150 *rit.* **Moderate, cantabile** ♩ = 70

Ruth

Naomi
mp cantabile
Ruth, wid - ow of my son,

Pno.
p sempre legato **Moderate, cantabile** ♩ = 70
With Ped.

154

Ruth

Naomi
you have be - come my friend, my part - ner, and my right hand. My

Pno.

158 *mp*

Ruth

Naomi

sole com - pan - ion in grief.

Pno.

161 *cantabile*

Ruth

Naomi

Moth-er, you mean hearth and home to me. With

Pno.

p gentle, no strong attacks on repeated chords

ped. with Ped.

164

Ruth

Naomi

grit and grace, you lead me in a sea - son of

Pno.

167

Ruth *p*
sor - row. Our

Naomi *p*
Our

Pno. *p*

171

Ruth *mp*
hus - bands gone, we sing a bit - ter song. The

Naomi *mp*
hus - bands gone, we sing a bit - ter song. The house of mem - o - ry

Pno. *mp*

176

Ruth *f subito p*
house of mem - o - ry our on - ly home. The house of mem - o - ry

Naomi *f subito p*
our on - ly home. The house of mem - o - ry

Pno. *f subito p*

Tempo I: Fast, agitated ♩ = 200 ♪ = 100

181

Ruth

our on - ly home.

Naomi

our on - ly home. Home... Home...

Pno.

p

Tempo I: Fast, agitated ♩ = 200 ♪ = 100

p

8^{vb}

189

Ruth

Naomi

Home... I'm a pit - i - ful wid-ow ma -

Pno.

mp

mf

mf

(8^{vb})

198

Ruth

Naomi

rooned in Mo-ab, and I must go home!

Pno.

f

f

205

Ruth

Naomi *mf*

I must leave this place to seek my

Pno. *mp*

210

Ruth

Naomi *mf*

na - tive land. I must leave this

Pno.

215

Ruth

Naomi

place and re - turn to Ju - dah, to Ju - dah's

Pno.

220

Ruth

Naomi

Pno.

f

new - ly wheat - gold - en fields.

224

Ruth

Naomi

Pno.

f

I will go with you to Ju - dah.

f

No, my daugh - ter. Do not

mf

230

Ruth

Naomi

Pno.

I will go with you to Ju - dah.

come with me. No, — my dar-ling.

236

Ruth

Naomi *p cresc. poco a poco*

I can - not bear to see your ex - ile from Mo - ab.

Pno. *p cresc. poco a poco*

241

Ruth

Naomi *p cresc. poco a poco*

I can - not see you dis - placed as I

Pno. *p cresc. poco a poco*

247

Ruth

Naomi *ff*

— once was!

Pno. *f ff*

accel. rit.

Let Ped. blur the texture *

Moderate, cantabile ♩ = 70

Ruth *mp*

I will go with you _____ to Ju - dah, _____ wher -

Naomi

Moderate, cantabile ♩ = 70

Pno. *p* *sempre legato*

with Ped. simile (sustain all notes in l.h. with fingers)

Ruth *poco rit.*

e - ver you will go _____ I _____ will go _____

Naomi

Pno. *poco rit.*

a tempo

Ruth

I will make of Ju - dah my ve - ry own, wher - e - ver you will jour - ney

Naomi

a tempo

Pno.

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266 *f* *poco rit.* *mp*

Ruth I will fol - low _____ Your

Naomi

Pno. *f* *poco rit.*

269 *a tempo*

Ruth peo - ple _____ will be my peo - ple your God _____ my _____

Naomi *mp* my heart _____ grown _____ hol - low is once a -

Pno. *a tempo* *mp* *sempre legato* with Ped.

272 *mf* *subito p*

Ruth God, I will make of Ju - dah my

Naomi *mf* gain _____ filled with hope, _____

Pno. *mf* *pp*

Let Ped. blur the texture
(changing pedal each change of harmony)

274

Ruth

ve - ry own. Wher - ev - er you will stay, I will

Naomi

Pno.

276

Ruth

stay. Wher - ev - er you will die, I will

Naomi

p my heart is filled

Pno.

278

Ruth

die, and there will I be

Naomi

my heart is filled.

Pno.

280

Ruth

bu - ried

Naomi

Pno.

282

Ruth

No - thing but death can di -

Naomi

No - thing but death can di -

Pno.

mp

284

Ruth

vide us, No-thing but death can di - vide us!

Naomi

vide us, No-thing but death can di - vide us!

Pno.

287

Ruth

Naomi

Pno.

Lea *p* (unmeasured tremolo)

290

Ruth

Naomi

Pno.

Come, sun. Look qui - et-ly on. Our hus-bands gone, we

Come, sun. Look qui - et-ly on. Our hus-bands gone, we

297

Ruth

Naomi

Pno.

Somewhat faster $\text{♩} = 84$ *mp*

sing a kin - dred song. Two wid-ows jour - ney to

sing a kin-dred song. Two wid-ows jour - ney to Beth - le-hem,

Somewhat faster $\text{♩} = 84$

302

Ruth Beth - le-hem, stir - ring the town with our mu-tual af - fec - tion.

Naomi troub-ling the town with our bit - ter af - flic - tion.

Pno.

307 *mf with much warmth*

Ruth We'll jour - ney back to a land of boun - ty,

Naomi We'll jour - ney back to a land of boun - ty,

Pno. *mf with much warmth*

313 *mf* back to Ju - dah of new - ly plen - te - ous bread. *f*

Naomi back to Ju - dah's plen - te - ous bread. *f*

Pno. *mf* *f*

318 *poco rit.* *a tempo* *p*

Ruth *For you, glad - ly, _____*

Naomi

318 *poco rit.* *a tempo* *p*

Pno.

325

Ruth *I will live a - mid the al - i - en corn; I will gath - er af - ter*

Naomi

325

Pno.

332 *rit.* *Somewhat slower, freely* ♩ = 70

Ruth *reap - ers _____ in the field. _____*

Naomi

332 *rit.* *Somewhat slower, freely* ♩ = 70

Pno.

mp

with Ped.

339 *mp*

Ruth
Your peo-ple, my peo - ple. Your God, my God.

Naomi

Pno.

343

Ruth

Naomi
mf
Not e-ven death can di - vide us!

Pno.

347 *mf* *rit.* *a tempo* *p* *rit.*

Ruth
Not e-ven death can di - vide us!

Naomi
p
Not e-ven death can di - vide us!

Pno.

rit. *a tempo* *rit.* *8va*

p

Leg.