

SAUNDER
CHOI

VERUM CORPUS

for SATB div. choir and string quartet

-FULL SCORE-

SAUNDER CHOI *music*



Verum Corpus is a multi-movement work for choir and string quartet, and sets the text of Amir Rabiya on the story of transformation, completion, and attainment of the true body. The text is inspired by the story of Caeneus, a mythological hero from Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. Caeneus was born as Caenis, a woman, who was abducted and raped by Poseidon. Caenis was so distraught, she demanded to be transformed into a man so that she may never be wronged again. Poseidon granted this wish, and gave Caeneus impenetrable skin. He went on to become one of the fiercest warriors in this mythology. In a battle with centaurs, Caeneus was struck down and crushed by tree trunks. He then transformed into a golden-winged bird and flew away.

Many of the characters experience trauma in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. Amir wanted this to be a poem that addressed that, drawing parallels to the experience of queer and transgender survivors of abuse and marginalization. More importantly, Amir wanted this to also be about how our chosen families love us, and how love can lead us to loving ourselves, and finding freedom.

While collaborating with Amir on this piece, I had asked them if they could incorporate the text of *Ave Verum Corpus* into the story. Given the conflict between the Christian religion and the LGBTQ+ perspective, I felt that weaving this traditional Eucharistic text into the story would be a poignant reclamation of the trans narrative and a recontextualization of the words "Hail, true body, whose pierced side flowed with water and blood" – offering a different commentary on these seemingly parallel narratives.

Verum Corpus is commissioned by the Windy City Performing Arts Center in celebration of their 40th year, and for the 2020 GALA Choruses Festival.

I. How Did You Know Me So Quickly?

II. You Are No Son of Mine

III. Ave Verum Corpus (I Became a Swan)

IV. In the Trial of Death

V. Whole

When we first met. We used no words.
Only the language of eyes.
How did you know me so quickly?
I thought you too beautiful for me,
But you cooed I see you, I want, I need
you are my world and that was everything...

You caressed the scars on my chest, the ones my father left
Soon, I told you: how he raised his sword and plunged it into me
how he screamed "You're no son of mine, "

*Hail, true body
Whose pierced side
Flowed with water and blood*

I became a swan, flew into the heavens. Dropped down and found you.
May it be for us a taste of things to come

Once I was yours, I became what you willed.
You wanted a horse. I became your steed.
I shrank. I thanked. I'd plead. And thanked.
Who knew the toll this war would take?
The violence began again. An eruption. Broken plates. Bruises.

*In the trial of death, you left me.
Strangers, coming home found me
Strangers sang my spirit back to me—they fed my light
Hail true body, which having truly suffered
Hail the body which returns to its truest state
In dying, I returned. In dying, I created myself whole.*

-Amir Rabiya

Verum Corpus

for SATB div. choir and string quartet

poetry by Amir Rabiya
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Saunder Choi (b. 1988)

I. How Did You Know Me So Quickly?

Moderately ♩ = 84

Soprano *p* When we first met. We used no words.

Alto *p* When we first met. We used no words.

Tenor *p* We used no

Bass

Violin 1 *sfp* molto sul pont. (s.p.) *pp* sul tasto (s.t.)
pizz. arco sul tasto (s.t.)

Violin 2 *mf* pizz. *pp* arco sul tasto (s.t.)

Viola *mf* *pp* arco sul tasto (s.t.)

Violoncello *pp*

7
S. *mp* On-ly the lan-guage of eyes. our eyes.

A. *p* eyes. our eyes.

T. *p* words. eyes. our eyes.

B. *p* eyes. our eyes.

Vln. 1 *mf espressivo* ord. *mp*

Vln. 2 *mf espressivo* ord. *mp*

Vla. *mf espressivo* ord. *mp*

Vc. *mf espressivo* ord. *mp*

13 18

S. *p* How did you know me so quick-ly? *(p)* eyes,

A. *p* How did you know? *(p)* eyes,

T. *p* How? *mp* I thought you too

B. *p* How? *mp* I thought

Vln. 1 *p*

Vln. 2 *p*

Vla. *p*

Vc. *mp* pizz. arco.

19

S. eyes. I see you, I want,

A. eyes. I see you, I want,

T. *mf* beau-ti-ful for me, but you cooed, cooed, cooed,

B. *mf* you too beau-ti-ful but you cooed, cooed, cooed,

Vln. 1 *mf* *cresc. poco a poco*

Vln. 2 *mf* *cresc. poco a poco*

Vla. *mf* *cresc. poco a poco*

Vc. *mf* *cresc. poco a poco*

24 *mf* *p*

S. I need you. How did you know me so quick - ly? —

A. I need you. How did you know me so quick - ly? —

T. coed. How did you know me so quick - ly? —

B. coed. How did you know me so quick - ly? —

Vln. 1 *sfp* molto s.p. molto sul pont. (s.p.)

Vln. 2 *sfp* molto sul pont. (s.p.)

Vla. *sfp* molto sul pont. (s.p.)

Vc. *sfp*

29 *mp*

S. How did you know me so quick - ly? —

A. How did you know me so quick - ly? —

T. How did you know me so quick - ly? —

B. How did you know me so quick - ly? —

Vln. 1 *ord.* *mp*

Vln. 2 *ord.* *mp*

Vla. *ord.* *mp*

Vc. *ord.* *mp*

35 *poco rit.* **36** *Meno mosso*

S. *mp* 3
You are my world and that was

A. *mp* 3
You are my world and that was

T. *p warmly*
I see you, I want, I need you.

B. *p warmly* *cresc.*
I see you.

Vln. 1 *p* *cresc.*

Vln. 2 *p* *cresc.*

Vla. *p* *cresc.*

Vc. *p* *cresc.*

39 *mf* 3
ev-'ry- thing. You are my world,

A. *mf* 3
ev-'ry- thing. You are my world and that was

T. *mp*
I see you, I want, I need you.

B. *mp* *cresc.*
I see you.

Vln. 1 *mf* 3

Vln. 2 *mf* 3

Vla. *mf* 3

Vc. *mf* 3

43

S. You are my world. You are my world you

A. ev-'ry - thing. You are my world and that was

T. I see you, I want, I need you.

B. I see, want, I need you.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

mf *poco f*

47

49

S. How did you know me so quick - ly?

A. ev - 'ry - thing. How did you know me so quick - ly?

T.

B.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

mp

51 *attacca*

S. *p*
How did you know me so quick - ly? How did you know me so quick - ly?

A. *p*
How did you know quick - ly? How did you know quick - ly?

T.

B.

Vln. 1 *fp*
pizz.

Vln. 2 *mf*

Vla.

Vc.

II. You Are No Son of Mine

Agitato ♩ = 152

1

S.

A.

T.

B.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla. *arco molto s.p.*

Vc. *pizz.*

7 11

S.

A. *mf marc.*
You car - essed the scars on my chest,

T.

B.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

12

S.

A. the ones my fa - ther_ left Soon, I told you how he raised his_ sword and_

T.

B.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

mp

19

S.

A. plunged it in - to me plunged it in - to me_ how he screamed "You are no son of mine."
sfp *sfp* *f*

T. plunged plunged

B.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

mp
sfp *sfp* *f* *sf* *sf*

25 29

p sempre

S. na na ma na ma na ma na ma

A. *mf* You car - essed the scars on my chest,

T. *mf* You car - essed the scars chest,

B.

Vln. 1 *arco* *mf* *poco f* *mp* *pizz.*

Vln. 2 *mf* *arco* *poco f* *mp* *pizz.*

Vla. *mf* *poco f* *mp* *pizz.*

Vc. *sf* *mf* *sf*

30

S. scars on my chest, na na ma na ma scars on my chest,

A. the ones my fa - ther left Soon, I told you how he

T. ones my fa - ther left Soon, I told you how he

B. *sf* *non. cresc.*

You

Vln. 1 *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.* *arco*

Vln. 2 *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.* *arco*

Vla. *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.* *arco*

Vc. *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.* *arco*

35 *mp* *poco marc.*

S. na na ma na ma scars on my chest, na na ma na ma scars on my chest,

A. raised his sword and plunged it in-to me plunged it in - to me

T. raised his sword plunged. You car - essed the scars on my chest, the

B. You You

poco f

sfp *mf marc.*

sfp *sim.*

Vln. 1 *pizz.*

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

mf *sf* *mf* *mf* *mf* *sf*

40

S. na na ma na ma na na ma na ma na ma na na ma na ma na ma na ma

A. — how he

T. scars on my chest, the scars on my chest, how he

B. You You You

sfp

Vln. 1 *arco*

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

46

44

S. screamed on my chest, na na ma na ma screamed on my chest, na na ma na ma

A. screamed screamed

T. screamed "You are no son of mine." "You are no son of mine."

B. You You You You "You are no son of mine." "You are no son of mine."

Vln. 1 *poco f pesante* *sfp* molto s.p.

Vln. 2 arco *poco f pesante* *sfp* molto s.p.

Vla. *f poss.* arco

Vc. *poco f pesante*

49

S. screamed on my chest, na na ma na ma na ma na ma na ma na ma na ma

A. *ff*

T. the scars on my chest, "You are no son of mine."

B. "You are no son of mine."

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc. *pizz.* *mf* *sf*

54

S.

A.

T.

B.

p marc.

You _____ You _____ You. You _____ You You

f "You are no son of mine."

f "You are no son of mine."

(molto s.p.)

Vln. 1

p

pizz.

Vln. 2

p

pizz.

Vla.

p

pizz.

Vc.

p

f

sf

sf

sf

PERUSAL SCORE

III. Ave Verum Corpus (I Became a Swan)

1 Quasi lament $\text{♩} = 60$ poco rit.

S.

A.

T.

B.

Vln. 1 *ord.*
f passionately arco ord.
mp

Vln. 2 *f passionately arco ord.*
mp

Vla. *f passionately arco ord.*
mp

Vc. *f passionately arco ord.*
mp

7 **7** a tempo, poco rubato *pp glacial*

S. *pp glacial*
A - ve ve - rum cor - pus. A - ve ve - rum cor - pus.

A. *pp glacial*
A - ve

T.

B.

Vln. 1 *pp*

Vln. 2 *pp* IV.

Vla. *pp* IV.

Vc. *mf molto espressivo* *p*

12 poco rit.

S. *A - ve ve - rum cor - pus. Cu - ius per - fo - ra - tum, flu - xit a - qua et san - gui -*

A. *ve - rum cor - pus. Cu - ius per - fo - ra - tum, flu - xit a - qua et san - gui -*

T.

B.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

5 *p*

18 20 a tempo

S. *ne. A - ve ve - rum cor - pus. A - ve,*

A. *ne. A - ve ve - rum cor - pus. A - ve,*

T. *I be - came a swan and flew to the hea - vens.*

B. *I be - came a swan and flew to the*

Vln. 1 *pp IV. p*

Vln. 2 *pp IV. p*

Vla. *pp pizz. p*

Vc. *p arco*

24

S. *A - ve ve - rum cor - pus. A - ve, A - ve ve - rum*

A. *A - ve ve - rum cor - pus. A - ve, A - ve ve - rum*

T. *hea - vens. Dropped down and found you. Found you.*

B. *hea - vens. Dropped down, Dropped down and found you.*

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

30

S. *cor - pus. Cu - ius per - fo - ra - tum, flu - xit a - qua et san - gui - ne.* *poco rall.*

A. *cor - pus. Cu - ius per - fo - ra - tum, flu - xit a - qua et san - gui - ne.*

T. *Dropped down and found you. found you.*

B. *Dropped down and found you. found you.*

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

35 Broadly

35 *poco f*

S. *A - - ve, A - ve ve - rum cor - pus.* *cresc. poco a poco*

M. *A - ve ve - rum cor - pus.* *A - ve* *cresc. poco a poco*

A. *I be - came a swan.* *Dropped*

T1. *f bring out* *I be - came a swan and flew to the hea - vens.* *I be - came a*

T2. *poco f* *f bring out* *I be - came I be - came a swan and flew to the hea - vens.*

B. *poco f* *I be - came a swan.* *Dropped* *cresc. poco a poco*

Vln. 1 *poco f*

Vln. 2 *poco f*

Vla. *poco f*

Vc. *poco f*

40 *cresc. poco a poco*

S. *A - ve ve - rum cor - pus.*

M. *ve - rum cor - pus.* *Cu - ius per - fo -*

A. *down and found you.* *A - - - ve*

T1. *swan and flew to the hea - vens.* *I be - came a swan and flew to the*

T2. *I be - came a swan and flew to the hea - vens.*

B. *down and found you.* *A - - - ve*

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

45

S. *Cu - ius per - fo - ra - - - tum. san - gui - ne.* **ff**

M. *ra - tum. Flu - xit a - qua et san - gui - ne.* **ff**

A. *ve - - - rum, Flu - xit a - qua et san - gui - ne.* **ff**

T1. *hea - vens. Flu - xit a - qua et san - gui - ne.* **ff**

T2. *I be - came a swan and flew to the hea - vens. san - gui - ne.* **ff**

B. *ve - - - rum cor - - - pus san - gui - ne.* **ff**

Vln. 1 **ff**

Vln. 2 **ff**

Vla. **ff**

Vc. **ff**

51 Slower

**slightly nasal, fast morphing vowels*

sub. p

51

S. */aeiou/...*

A. */aeiou/...* **mp**

T. *A - ve ve - rum cor - pus. A - ve ve - rum cor - pus.* **p**

B. */aeiou/...*

Vln. 1 **mp**

Vln. 2 **mp**

Vla. **mp**

Vc. **mp**

56 *rall.* *pp*

S. *pp* hmm

A. *mf pesante* *pp* hmm
 Es - to no - bis prae - gus - ta - tum
 *slightly nasal, fast morphing vowels

T. *p meno* *pp* hmm
 /aeiou/...

B. *mf pesante* *pp* (mm)
 Es - to no - bis prae - gus - ta - tum

Vln. 1 *pp*

Vln. 2 *pp*

Vla. *pp*

Vc. *mp* *pp*

PERUSAL SCORE

IV. In the Trial of Death

Moderately ♩ = 76

1

S.

A.

T.

B.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

8

S.

A.

T.

B.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

16 *mp* *espressivo*

S. Once I was yours, I be-came what you willed. You

M. *pp* *p*
hmm oh oh

A. *pp* *p*
hmm oh oh

T. *pp* *p*
hmm oh oh

B. *pp* *p*
hmm oh oh

Vln. 1 *p*

Vln. 2 *p*

Vla. *p*

Vc.

24

S. want-ed a horse. I be - came your steed. I shrank. I thanked.

M. oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh

A. oh oh oh oh oh oh oh

T. oh oh oh oh oh oh oh

B. oh oh oh oh oh oh oh

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

31 36 *mf*

S. I'd plead. And thanked. Who knew the toll this war would take? Once

M. oh oh Once

A. oh oh

T. oh oh

B. oh oh

Vln. 1 *mf*

Vln. 2 *mf*

Vla. *mf* arco

Vc. *mf*

37

S. I was yours, I be - came what you willed.

M. I was yours, I be - came what you willed.

A. *mf* Once I was yours, I be - came what you willed.

T. in

B. in

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

43

S. You want-ed a horse. I be - came your steed.

M. You want-ed a horse. I be - came your steed.

A. You want-ed a horse. I be - came your steed.

T. *mf* mor - tis ex - a - mi - ne. in mor - tis ex -

B. *mf* mor - tis ex - a - mi - ne. in mor - tis ex -

Vln. 1 *poco più*

Vln. 2 *poco più*

Vla. *poco più*

Vc. *poco più*

48

S. *poco f* I shrank. I thanked. I'd plead. And thanked. Who

M. *poco f* I shrank. I thanked. I'd plead. And thanked. Who

A. *poco f* I shrank. I thanked. I'd plead. And thanked. Who

T. *cresc. poco a poco* a - mi - ne, you left me, you left me, you left me, you left me

B. *cresc. poco a poco* a - mi - ne, you left me, you left me, you left me, you left me

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

54 56

S. knew the_ toll_ this war would_ take? *f* in mor - - - - -

M. knew this war? *f* in mor - - - - -

A. knew this war? *f* in mor - - - - -

T. *più f* in mor - tis. The vio - lence be - gan a -

B. *f* in mor - tis. in mor - - - - -

Vln. 1 *f agitato*

Vln. 2 *f agitato*

Vla. *f agitato*

Vc. *f agitato*

57

S. tis ex - - a - - - - - mi -

M. tis ex - - a - - - - - mi - - -

A. tis ex - - a - - - - - mi -

T. gain. An e - rup - tion. Bro - ken

B. tis ex - - a - - - - - mi - - -

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

59

S. *ne.* *mor* - - - - -

M. *ne.* *mor* - - - - -

A. *ne.* *mor* - - - - -

T. plates. Bruis - es. *più f* The vio - lence be - gan a -

B. *ne.* The vio - lence be - gan a -

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

61

S. *tis* ex - a - - - - - *mi* -

M. *tis* ex - a - - - - - *mi* - - -

A. *tis* ex - a - - - - - *mi* -

T. gain. An e - rup - tion. Bro - ken

B. gain. An e - rup - tion. Bro - ken

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

rall.

63

S. *ne.* Buis - es. *ff*

M. *ne.* Buis es. *ff*

A. *ne.* Buis - es. *ff*

T. plates. Buis - es. *ff*

B. plates. Buis - es. *ff*

Vln. 1 *ff*

Vln. 2 *ff*

Vla. *ff*

Vc. *ff*

65 a tempo

S. *p* You left me.

M. *p* You left me

A. You

T.

B.

Vln. 1 *p* *mf*

Vln. 2 *p* *mf*

Vla. *p* *mf*

Vc. *p* *mf*

poco rit. .

70

S. *lunga*

M. *lunga*

A. *lunga*
left me.

T. *pp* *lunga*
You left me You left me You left me.

B. *pp* *lunga*
You left me.

Vln. 1 *p* *lunga*

Vln. 2 *p* *lunga*

Vla. *p* *lunga*

Vc. *p* *lunga*

V. Whole

1 Slowly ♩ = 72

S.

A.

T.

B.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

8

S.

A.

T.

B.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

14

S. Stran - gers, sang my spi - rit back to me.

A. Stran - gers, sang my spi - rit back to me.

T. Stran - gers, sang my spi - rit back to me.

B. Stran - gers, sang my spi - rit back to me.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

19

S. They fed my light, light, light. *rall.*

A. They fed my light, light, light.

T. They fed my light, light, light.

B. They fed my light, light, light.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

24 Broadly ♩=64

24 *poco f*

S. *A - - ve, A - ve ve - rum cor - pus.*

M. *A - ve ve - rum cor - pus. Ve - re pas - sum*

A. *A - - ve, A - ve ve - rum cor - pus.*

T. *f* Stran - gers, com - ing home found me. Stran - gers, sang my spi - rit back to

B. *f* Stran - gers, com - ing home found me. Stran - gers, sang my spi - rit back to

Vln. 1 *poco f*

Vln. 2 *poco f*

Vla. *poco f*

Vc. *poco f*

30

S. *Ve - - re pas - sum im - mo - la - tum. A - ve*

M. *im - mo - la - tum. A - - ve ve - rum cor - pus.*

A. *Ve - - re pas - sum im - mo - la - tum. A - ve*

T. *f* me. They fed my light.

B. *f* me. They fed my light.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

46

rit. *pp*

S. *rum* *cor* *pus.*

A. *rum* *mp* *cor* *pus.* *pp*

T. In dy - ing, I cre - a - ted my - self whole. *p*

B. turned. cre - a - ted my - self whole. *p*

Vln. 1 *ppp*

Vln. 2 *ppp*

Vla. *ppp*

Vc. *ppp* *pizz.* *pp*

II.

PERUSAL SCORE