

## Program Notes — Good Mourning

Premiere: September 20, 1997, Fort Lewis Community Concert Hall, Durango, Colorado  
Music by Herman Hupfeld, J. S. Bach, Samuel Barber  
Choreography by James Sewell  
Lighting by Kevin A. Jones  
Costumes by Mary Hansmeyer

### Original Cast:

Philip Amer  
Penelope Freeh  
Jesse Hammel  
Anna Laghezza  
Sally Rouse  
James Sewell

Themes of past and imminent loss informed James Sewell's choreographic approach to this ballet.

The music for the opening movement, *"As Time Goes By,"* gained enduring fame from Dooley Wilson's definitive performance in the 1942 film *"Casablanca."* Herman Hupfeld (b. 1894, Montclair, New Jersey; d. 1951, Montclair) wrote *"As Time Goes By"* for *"Everybody's Welcome,"* a now-forgotten 1931 musical about a young couple in Greenwich Village. This arrangement by long-time collaborators Bill Burnett and Suzy Williams provides the backdrop for a woman's memories of life with her deceased husband. The section was commissioned by New Jersey attorney Louis Gonnella and is dedicated to his father's memory – and for his mother, who has lived with her husband's continued presence for 25 years since his death.

*"Covery"* finds a widow inside "his" shirt and memories, accompanied by J. S. Bach's (b. 1685, Eisenach; d. 1750, Leipzig) chorale prelude *"Ich ruf' zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ,"* performed by pianist Alfred Brendel. The first choreographic collaboration between Sewell and his wife, Sally Rouse, this solo was performed originally in November 1991, in memory of Rouse's first husband, who died from cancer at age 24. *"Covery"* received its first performance on November 23, 1991, at The David Howard Dance Center in New York City.

Another Bach prelude performed by Brendel, *"Nun Komm' der Heiden Heiland,"* underlies the third movement, *"Common Loss."* First previewed as its own dance at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, New York, on April 17, 1993, this adagio vigil for six dancers reflects themes of comfort and support among pallbearers coming together in a common place. The cast for the first performance included Steven Hyde, Monica Lender, Denis Lue, Sally Rouse, James Sewell, and Julia Tehven. The formal premiere performance took place at the Clark Studio Theater in New York City on April 29, 1993.

The life reminiscences and present realities of a dying spouse's caregiver become entwined in *"Suspended Breath,"* the closing movement, set to the *"Agnus Dei"* from

the “*Adagio for Strings*” by Samuel Barber (b. 1910, Westchester, Pennsylvania; d. 1981, New York City), one of his most popular works. Public opinion about the legal, medical, and religious ethics of euthanasia remains divided, and its treatment here may cause discomfort to some. “I know that people might react strongly and think I’m taking a position on the issue,” Sewell says, “but this is the image that emerged from the music for me.”

— Gary Peterson, Roy Close, 1997