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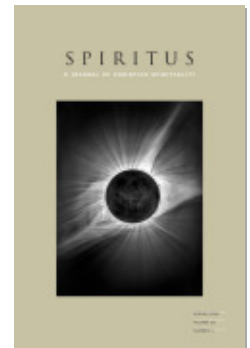
Deep Space in the B Minor Mass

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Deep Space in the B Minor Mass

CHRISTIAN WIMAN

How could he tell them that it was not silence,
the silence that claimed him even as their song soared toward God?
How could he tell them the flame that filled him
brooked no broken voice, and of a sudden
brokenness was all he was?

Somewhere in the seam between myth and memory
is the conductor's professional, almost imperceptible
pause, his banked rage of disbelief;
the whisper-hiss traveling through the audience like a fuse;
and a song that ended for everyone but one,
whose career collapsed the instant his real gift emerged.

Amid a moment's most minor, most easily-losable keys—
the leash clinks and the ice clicks,
the handslap on the back of the trash truck that means
this stink can move—
amid the cold calls and the catcalls and the calls
that you want and do not want to be
from a living God,

consider the soloist of silence,
who, while he walks his block nodding to each neighbor,
and stirs his stew to an only-and-ever-more-inward whistle,
and sits rocklike in his pew for the responsorial psalm,
keeps faith with the one moment in his life
when he had it.