

JOSH STENBERG

SET PIECE FOR THE CHORAL COMPETITION: “DOMINUM, NON SUM DIGNUS”

spotty boy squats, spiking hair in pianoblacksheen.
poly basses, making each other nervous by asking “aren’t you nervous?”
the conductor reknits his tie; the pianist rehearses a tricky attack.
reports filter in of beauty disbursed throughout the competition.
guys, *guys*: never fear, there will be a broken entry here and there
someone will rollick forte into the mezzo piano
or misplace, for one vital agonizing bar, the repeat,
or forge a fraction too headlong into the crescendo
ceding end-ly to the
lukewarm, spare-judicious applause.
in harmony, as in everything, we are such imperfect machines,
blurting, busting, cannonading from the ranks,
dropping shamefaced back into the fold. yet
at the celebratory meal we will eat eleven-tenths of our shared third prize
leaving nothing—less than nothing—over.
lord, to whom we allegedly sing, and who strives to be the case,
grant us many many days that leave us with
this particular variety of debt.