

*This work was commissioned by the Choral Arts Ensemble of Rochester, Minnesota, Rick Kvam,  
Director.*

When creation was new  
and all the stars were kindled into glorious flame,  
the gods assembled and began to sing joyously,  
praising the perfection of the world in all its wonders.

But suddenly, a cry:  
“Is that a break in the chain of light?  
Has one of the stars been lost?”

The lyre-strings snapped, the music ceased,  
and they mourned, saying,  
“Yes, the star is lost.  
She was the best,  
the glory of the heavens.”

From that day forth the search goes on,  
and the lament continues  
for the one that gave us such joy.

But in the deep silence of night  
the stars smile and murmur among themselves,  
“Why this vain seeking?  
Perfection continues, unbroken.”

*adapted from “The Lost Star” by Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)*

When Rick Kvam suggested a setting of “Lost Star” by Bengali poet, novelist and educator Rabindranath Tagore, I welcomed the opportunity to explore the sound world of Northern India with its characteristic strict patterns of scales (ragas) and beats (talas). My text is an adaptation of Tagore’s own English 1915 translation, and I have borrowed characteristics from two ragas to portray the beginning of the world (rag Hindol: 1 3 #4 6 [7] 1) and the late-night murmuring of the stars (rag Jhinjhoti: 1 2 4 5 6 1 b7 6 5 4 3 2 1). Rhythmically, the first stanza is set in the Rupak tal – a 2-bar 7/8 pattern – and the last stanza employs the Dadra tal – a 2-bar 3/4 pattern.

Duration: c. 5:30

Performance note: close quickly to “m” on the word “assembled” (m. 27-30), and to “n” on the words “wonders” (m. 42) and “unbroken” (tenors, m. 121-122 and 128-129; sopranos, m. 133 and 135-138; and the rest of the choir, m. 138.)