

## **Film Screening of *Shining Night: A Portrait of Composer Morten Lauridsen***

Directed by Michael Stillwater

Richter Hall

October 26, 2014

### **Introduction**

Welcome to this first-year seminar screening of *Shining Night*. We chose this documentary film for everyone in the seminar to see, because we felt that it offered an unusually detailed portrait of the personal, professional, and creative resources that composer Morten Lauridsen draws upon to write choral compositions of serene beauty. In addition to providing a wonderful overview of Lauridsen's music, the film also provides breathtaking shots of the place that has inspired Lauridsen the most, Waldron Island, which is located off the coast of the state of Washington.

This is a quiet, reflective film, one that depends upon our careful attention to image, sound, and word, so that we can gain an understanding of what Lauridsen's work means in the larger world. As you are watching this film, please put aside expectations that we might have when we watch a blockbuster film such as *Spiderman* or *The Hunger Games*.

==> Instead, this is a film that invites you to enter **a different world**, and **a different state of being**, so that you can **reflect on the meaning of music crafted by one of our most prominent living composers**.

**Please keep your smart phones silenced and tucked away**, so that we're not distracted by those intermittent bursts of light and sound when folks check Facebook, Instagram, or their text messages. –Those messages will be ready for you when our screening is over.

Below we have included a few general questions to think about as you are watching the film. **We encourage you to jot down some notes when you notice things that are important. Doing so will help you talk actively about the film in your seminar class.**

### **Questions to Hold in the Mind during the Film Screening**

1. How did Lauridsen discover that music would be his **life's work**? What **key events** occurred that led to the discovery of his purpose? **What did he do** once he decided that music would be his **vocation or calling**?
2. What does Lauridsen do **to create a piece of music that will reach an audience**? How does he create music that has such **timeless beauty**?
3. At one place near the end of the film, Lauridsen asserts that music is one of the activities to which we turn **to "find joy and meaning in life."** As you watch the film, think about what he might mean by this statement.
4. What is **the influence of Waldron Island** on his life and his work?
5. What do the musicians, conductors, poets, and fellow composers say about **the meaning and significance of Lauridsen's music**?