

A Silence at the Edge of the Music

for Lee Talner, in honor of Cathy Meints

This moment holds all sound in check;
silence, poised, hangs on the verge
of expectation. The fervor
of preparation fades away,
the many forms of readying
are done. Only the moment matters;
a collective act of will attends,
in quiet, full intensity
to music's imminent advance.

So, it may be, a mountain stream
puts all its fractiousness aside,
leaving the steep descent behind
with all its boisterous noise and spray,
and settles for a moment, calm,
pooling itself in a quiet shade
of evergreens, circling, swelling
in silence to the coming waterfall.

And here, the gamba's sharp tipped bow
touches the waiting string. All still.
Soon will come the sudden change—
the hand's pressure, the flex of wood,
the bending hair; and then, with one
deep and mindful breath, at last
the passionate acceleration,
the cascade of wood and hair and gut,
onrush of silence flowing into sound.

— Nicholas Jones, June 2016