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I Live in the Woods of My Words - Program Note

I Live in the Woods of My Words was commissioned by The Juilliard School for soprano Mikaela Bennett and the Alice Tully Vocal Arts Recital, and premiered in May 2023 at Alice Tully Hall in New York, NY.

The song features text by poet Hannah Emerson, a poet I have long admired and was excited by the prospect of honoring her words through song. Hannah is a nonspeaking autistic poet whose work has been featured in *The Paris Review*, *Poetry* magazine, *The Nation*, *BOMB Magazine*, the Poetry Society of America, *Literary Hub*, and the *Brooklyn Rail*. Below is an excerpt by Hannah on her poetry:

“Please kiss the page that I write on trying to get you to see the universe in the way that I do yes yes. Please try to kiss the animal inside you trying to bite you yes yes. Please try to kiss the nothing that is waiting for you yes yes. Please try to find your deeper ear great teachers you can hear more than the normal way yes yes. Please try to live in the caldron of magic that we swim in yes yes. Please try to go to the great great great mother of all yes yes. I love you yes yes.”