

Near Odessa was written for *Bella Voce*, a women's choir based in Reno, Nevada, and conducted by Jennifer Tibben. The poem is from a recent volume by Minneapolis writer Patricia Kirkpatrick, written during a time when she was making frequent car trips through the western Minnesota landscape to the tiny town of Odessa. The images of golden fields, clattering harvest machinery, the far-off cry of geese, the hum of tires on the highway and the waves on the river, all are fodder for sound pictures.

duration: c. 3:30

## NEAR ODESSA

Near the end of summer.  
Wheatfield with lark. With swift,  
longspur, and sparrow. I see the birds  
opening tails and wings  
above grasses  
and hidden nests.  
Soybeans with bells, yellowing, green  
tassels of corn, geese  
again and again.  
I see the birds  
but wind takes all the sound.  
Small towns are reduced to chains or storefronts,  
boarded-up.  
Almost to the river called a lake, grey stones of water,  
dammed, white-capped, hinge  
between states.  
Some fields are so gold they seem to be singing.  
The gold fields lie down, flat but not empty,  
and will be harvested later with blades.  
Near Odessa  
I come to a place where the end is beginning.  
Where the light is absolute, it rises.

-Patricia Kirkpatrick (*Odessa*)

"Near Odessa" from *Odessa* by Patricia Kirkpatrick (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2012).  
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