

Drum Major

Elizabeth Garcia

—*for Hardy Hatcher*

The church's framework swayed in the air.
Inside, big women with big grief
swayed with all their weight inside, and sang
big songs to bloom big flowers

of big women. Their big grief filled
the room, on fire with moaning
big songs to bloom big flowers,
orange on a white casket.

The room burned with moans
of HOLy SPIrit, flaming blossoms,
orange on a white casket, and
we raised our four white hands

with HOLy SPIrit, white-hot blossoms
wilting on black boughs, but
we raised them (only four white hands),
knowing private grief is not enough.

I wilted there against a big black bough,
too distracted to grieve—
Private grief is not enough!
SINGas GOT to SING!

too distracted for grief:
PREACHas GOT to PREACH!
SINGas GOT to SING!
and USHas GOT to USH!

PREACHas GOT to PREACH!
with their elbows, snapping fingers,
and USHas GOT to USH!
couldn't remember him alive,

with his elbows, fingers snapping
music, until I was alone. Then:
I could remember him, lively,
all in white, calling out the tempo,

alone with the music. Then he
swayed with all his weight aside, a song
in white, scrawling out the tempo,
swaying, framing churches in the air.