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Stephanie E. Magaro  
*Messiah College*

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## **Conductor Analyses of Choral Works**

**Stephanie E. Magaro  
Advanced Conducting Project (MUAP 504-04)  
May 6, 2016**

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## **Sicut Cervus**

### **Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525-1594)**

Giovanni Pierluigi was called Palestrina during and after his life because of the town near Rome where he grew up and possibly was born.<sup>1</sup> He worked in Palestrina and Rome for most of his life. As a teenager, he gained his training in Rome and later was appointed organist at a Cathedral in Palestrina in 1544.<sup>2</sup> After working there for about six years, he became a singer in the Cappella Giulia, then the Cappella Sistina in Rome. Palestrina was married and had 3 children, so when Pope Julius III died, the next pope adhered strictly to Vatican policy and dismissed Palestrina because he was married.<sup>3</sup> Then, Palestrina succeeded Orlando di Lasso as the maestro di cappella (the choirmaster) at San Giovanni in Laterano.<sup>4</sup> In the following years, he held the same positions at multiple cathedrals, finally returning to Cappella Giulia (the training institution for Italian musicians) in 1571, where he stayed until he died at age sixty-eight.<sup>5</sup>

Palestrina is known as one of the most well-known composers of the Renaissance.<sup>6</sup> He was a leader of change in the music of the Catholic church in his time. Acquiring many leadership positions in the highest cathedrals in Italy, Palestrina was the musical leader of the Counter-Reformation and served during

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<sup>1</sup> Dennis Shrock, *Choral Repertoire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 61.

<sup>2</sup> Shrock, *Choral Repertoire*, 62.

<sup>3</sup> Shrock, *Choral Repertoire*, 62.

<sup>4</sup> Shrock, *Choral Repertoire*, 62.

<sup>5</sup> Frank Abrahams, *Teaching Music Through Performance in Choir, Volume 1* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2005), 264-265.

<sup>6</sup> Shrock, *Choral Repertoire*, 62.

the Council of Trent.<sup>7</sup> He composed masses, motets, and madrigals, so his repertoire is not limited to sacred music.

### **Composition**

This piece is representative of *stile antico*, or *prima prattica*, meaning the music of the Renaissance era in which polyphony was more important than the text. It is characterized by a strict structure built on clear points of imitation, uninterrupted by cadences.<sup>8</sup> Melismas only appear on stressed syllables of the word. *Sicut Cervus* is a motet that has two parts, the *prima pars* and the *secundo pars*, called *Sitivit anima mea*. *Sicut cervus* is the first of this pair and is most often performed alone, however liturgically, the two parts function together since the text should appear fully.<sup>9</sup>

The imitative polyphony that it exhibits uses balanced melodic shapes, prepared and resolved dissonances, and symmetry in the form. According to Shrock, in Palestrina's motets, "melodies are characterized by wide melodic intervals, with stepwise motion in the opposite direction following any leap of a third or a fourth, rhythms are within a narrow range of durational values, with a preponderance of half and quarter notes and harmonies are logically ordered with buildup of tension followed by inevitable resolution."<sup>10</sup> The text, which comes from Psalm 41, is divided into four short phrases that overlap slightly.

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<sup>7</sup> Shrock, *Choral Repertoire*, 62.

<sup>8</sup> Abrahams, *Teaching Music Through Performance in Choir*, 265.

<sup>9</sup> Abrahams, *Teaching Music Through Performance in Choir*, 265.

<sup>10</sup> Shrock, *Choral Repertoire*, 63.

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## **Historical Perspective**

Palestrina wrote *Sicut Cervus* in 1584, during the later part of his life. He lost his wife just a few short years before this, which allowed him to follow the rules of the Catholic Church faithfully and he continued to write liturgical music.<sup>11</sup> *Sicut cervus* is one of Palestrina's more mature works, written later in his life, ten years before his death.

## **Technical Considerations**

Each independent voice part must have a strong sense of the rhythmic flow of each phrase. The breath control needed to sustain the line and pulse of the phrases is extensive. To help with breath control, using a motion or gesture to show the phrase and the movement will aid in the energy needed for one phrase. In addition, vowel onsets, consonant endings and melismas require particular attention, especially since each part is independent. Rehearsing each part separately before putting them together is suggested so that the conductor can then bring out the most important parts in his conducting. Actively listening for other parts, while maintaining a strong sense of one single line is essential for tuning and balance.<sup>12</sup>

The conductor should be able to think beyond the bar line and have a clear grasp of the text and stress in each part. In accordance with the historical context of the piece, there should be a slight flexibility in the tempo, however the

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<sup>11</sup> Abrahams, *Teaching Music Through Performance in Choir*, 265.

<sup>12</sup> Abrahams, *Teaching Music Through Performance in Choir*, 266.

beat pattern in cut time (slashed c) needs to be clear. Because of the rhythmic challenges for the ensemble, using a simple up/down gesture in “cut time” rather than having a choir subdivide and mechanically find their way around the rhythms will be more effective. It is helpful for a conductor to memorize entrances for cueing and breathing with the ensemble. For both the conductor and the ensemble, marking the score with text translations, IPA pronunciations, and text stress syllables is key for the imitative structure to emerge.

### **Stylistic Considerations**

The score shows “c” for common time, although according to Plank, the meter would be slashed c, because “slashed c is used mainly in motets, and C used mainly in madrigals.”<sup>13</sup> Measure lines are in the score only to aid the performer<sup>14</sup>, but the beat structure should be disregarded and the tactus and tempo should be felt based on the strong syllables in the text, not necessarily on the downbeat of each measure.

In addition, singers should minimize vibrato to facilitate tuning. Palestrina, and other composers in his time period, handled dissonances in a very controlled manner. No extra emphasis is required on the dissonance, and instead, it should be treated as an organic part of the phrase.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Steven Plank, *Choral Performance: A Guide to Historical Practice*, (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2004), 74.

<sup>14</sup> Abrahams, 266.

<sup>15</sup> Abrahams, 266.

## **Musical Elements**

The ranges of *Sicut cervus* are not challenging. Originally set in the key of F major, *Sicut cervus* can be found published often in A-flat major, which may be an accurate estimate of the pitch standard for Rome in Palestrina's time.<sup>16</sup> The harmony stays in the key, and always abides by strict harmonic counterpoint rules. Phrases have the construction like an arch: a build-up, a climax, a tapering off, and a resolution to the last note, usually a half note or a whole note.<sup>17</sup> The lengths of the phrases are varied. There are often long melismas on the word *desiderat*, perhaps expressing the meaning of the word, and the emphasis on the text. Altos in particular have extremely long phrases. Basses often have large leaps in the melodic line.

## **Form and Structure**

*Sicut Cervus* is an a cappella motet, through-composed in form. Each of the phrases are given equal treatment imitatively. The two lines of text are separated by a Renaissance cadence, overlapped by the alto line finishing the first line, and the bass line beginning the new line. There is only one authentic cadence in the piece at measure 54 between the soprano and tenor. The soprano stays on the finalis, and the alto, tenor and bass sing an extension at the end of the piece.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Abrahams, 266.

<sup>17</sup> Abrahams, 267.

<sup>18</sup> Abrahams, 267.



## *The Last Words of David*

### Randall Thompson (1899-1984)

Randall Thompson is known to be one of the most important choral composers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Originally from New York City, Thompson went to Harvard University and studied for three years at the American Academy in Rome. Thompson was an influential teacher, holding positions at many prestigious universities such as Wellesley, University of California-Berkeley, Curtis, University of Virginia, Princeton, and finally, his alma mater of Harvard University.<sup>19</sup> Some of his choral compositions, especially his collections, such as *Frostiana*, *The Testament of Freedom*, and the *Peaceable Kingdom* were among the most widely published and performed pieces in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>20</sup> Most of his musical language is diatonic, and uses parallel motion chords in first or second inversion. People love and are moved by his work because of its gentle harmonies and simplicity.

Although he also received accolades for his Second Symphony, his choral output was his most significant contribution as a composer. His repertoire consists of 27 works and sets of songs, usually small-scale compositions for mixed chorus a cappella or with piano. Among some of his most famous small-scale works are *Alleluia*, *Frostiana*, and *The Last Words of David*. He also wrote two oratorios, a Requiem, and larger works like *The Peaceable Kingdom*, and *The Testament of Freedom*.

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<sup>19</sup> Abrahams, 234.

<sup>20</sup> Shrock, 720.

## **Composition**

*The Last Words of David* was commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra in honor of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the conductor, Serge Koussevitzky.<sup>21</sup> In the summer of 1949, Koussevitzky asked Thompson himself to write something for the chorus of the Berkshire Music Center and the Boston Symphony. The piece was written in the same year, 1949. Because of time constraints, it is said that Thompson found the text in a hotel room Gideon Bible, while writing his book, *College Music*.<sup>22</sup> The text comes from 2 Samuel 23:3-4 in the Bible.

## **Historical Perspective**

*The Last Words of David* is an anthem that can be used in a liturgical setting or a concert setting.<sup>23</sup> The piece was first performed on August 12<sup>th</sup>, 1949, at Lenox, Massachusetts under the baton of Dr. Koussevitzky, to begin the Tanglewood Music Festival concerts.<sup>24</sup> It was used as a conclusion to the State Department's documentary film, "Tanglewood," in the 'Voice of America Series.'<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Shrock, 721.

<sup>22</sup> Abrahams, 235.

<sup>23</sup> Abrahams, 235.

<sup>24</sup> Nick Strimple, *Choral Music in the Twentieth Century* (Pompton Plains, New Jersey: Amadeus Press, LLC, 2002), 226-227.

<sup>25</sup> Randall Thompson, *The Last Words of David*, 2.

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## **Technical Considerations**

In all voices, consider working on dynamic control, with plenty of crescendos and changes in dynamics throughout the piece. A gradual, seamless integration and use of the left hand in conducting will aid the ensemble in dynamic changes. Specifically, the *sfz p cresc.* on the word, "just" on page 4 will require breath control and proper space. Accent the beginning of the word using an explosive consonant, then back away immediately to *piano*. Exercises in breath support will assist this control, as the choir learns to attack the note at a forte dynamic, then sing the pitch softly, followed by a crescendo.

Another technical consideration is the rhythmically and harmonically challenging "Alleluia" polyphonic section. Count singing and word stress will help to perfect the ending section. In almost all voice parts, large melodic intervals are present which require proper preparation of breath and vowel shape. The accompaniment also presents some challenges, such as the quick running notes in the opening and last section, lots of accidentals, articulation markings, and dynamic contrast.

The conductor should use a slow, smooth, weighty gesture. The conductor should also pay attention to the contrast between the three sections, knowing the dynamic structure, as well as all of the vocal parts and the differences that are present in the accompaniment.

### **Stylistic Considerations**

Specifically in the middle section, Thompson uses word painting, such as the harmonic shift to a major chord on the word “light,” the crescendo on the word “morning,” and the rhythm and diction that should be used for the word “springing.” One should follow all the composer’s markings in the score!<sup>26</sup>

### **Musical Elements**

Harmonically, Thompson’s work is set in G major, but there is use of secondary chords and tonicization of other keys. The ranges are accessible, although the soprano section must be capable of a controlled high A in the Alleluia section. For better articulation and clearer understanding, notes that are tied to an eighth note can be released on the beat, instead of on the upbeat. The piano reduction of the orchestra could also be played on organ.

### **Form and Structure**

The form of this piece is in three distinct parts, which should be executed with different vocal timbres and characters.

- Fanfare opening
- Rising of the sun
- Imitative Alleluia section

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<sup>26</sup> Abrahams, 235.

## **Sure on This Shining Night**

### **Morten Lauridsen (b. 1943)**

Morten Lauridsen was born in Colfax, Washington, and he was raised in Portland, Oregon. He studied, and currently serves as a professor of composition at the University of Southern California. He has composed for the Los Angeles Master Chorale and the Harvard Glee Club, and has received numerous honorary doctorates from highly regarded institutions. Many of his works have sold over 100,000 copies and he is known as the most published and performed American choral composer of modern times. His best known works are secular song cycles and include *Mid-Winter Songs*, *Madrigali*, and *Les Chansons des Roses*. His repertoire includes some art songs, instrumental works and a series of sacred motets, such as *O Magnum Mysterium*.

In 2006, he was named an "American Choral Master" by the National Endowment for the Arts and he received the 2007 National Medal of Arts by the President in a White House ceremony.<sup>27</sup> Lauridsen's compositional techniques reflect the "lyrical and elegant language of the texts, with distinct melodic and harmonic materials recurring."<sup>28</sup> Nick Strimple, a choral scholar, describes Lauridsen as "the only American composer in history who can be called a mystic (whose) probing, serene work contains an elusive and indefinable ingredient which leaves the impression that all the questions have been answered."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Frank S. Albinder, *Teaching Music Through Performance in Choir, Volume 3* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2011), 443-445.

<sup>28</sup> Shrock, 752.

<sup>29</sup> Nick Strimple, *Choral Music in the Twentieth Century* (Pompton Plains, New Jersey:

## **Composition**

Morten Lauridsen originally composed *Sure on This Shining Night* for a choral song cycle set to poems by Rilke, Neruda, and Agee. The song cycle, called *Nocturnes*, is to be sung with a focus on the text, mirroring the style of musical theater. The other two songs in the set are *Sa Nuit d'Été*, and the a cappella, *Soneto de la Noche*. Lauridsen composed the cycle for the American Choral Directors Association as part of the Raymond W. Brock Memorial Commission program. The premiere performance of this piece was at the 2005 ACDA National Convention by the Donald Brinegar Singers and Lauridsen accompanied on piano.<sup>30</sup> The text comes from American poet, author and film critic, James Agee. The poem *Sure on This Shining Night* comes from a book by Agee, published in 1934.

## **Historical Perspective**

Musicians today, and far into the future, will come across this piece and recognize Lauridsen's music. The use of inverted chords, dissonance, long flowing melodies, deep expression, and ethereal character<sup>31</sup> are popular among musicians and audiences. According to Strimple, "the contrapuntal interplay of melodic elements combined with the constant realignment of a few vertical sonorities—a Renaissance technique—results in the undulating and glistening

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Amadeus Press, 2005), 247.

<sup>30</sup> Albinder, 444.

<sup>31</sup> Albinder, 444.

textures for which Lauridsen's music is justly famous."<sup>32</sup> The sound of his music is inherently American.<sup>33</sup>

### **Technical Considerations**

One of the most important musical qualities that Lauridsen uses is dissonance. The ensemble must pay careful attention to the balance and expression of each dissonance so that it may serve its correct purpose in the music. For example, a conductor should identify and even isolate dissonances in rehearsal and discuss possible reasons why Lauridsen would write dissonance. Overall, the melody at first seems difficult with unexpected leaps, but it is a beautiful and singable<sup>34</sup> line that must be sustained in a legato style. The vowels, especially on diphthongs like "night", should be unified, and consonants ended clearly together as an ensemble. All diphthongs should be handled by singing the first vowel the longest.

The piano is very much a part of the ensemble, acting as more than just accompaniment, but adding to the emotion and setting of the text. Tempo and meter changes are almost constant throughout, so the conductor must analyze the score and determine when and how to shape the phrases with a natural rhythm and flexible tempo.

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<sup>32</sup> Strimple, 247.

<sup>33</sup> Albinder, 445.

<sup>34</sup> Albinder, 445.

## **Stylistic Considerations**

The singers must have an aural understanding of dissonance used in contemporary music. At the crux of Lauridsen's piece is the relationship of the text to the music and the ensemble. The text gradually changes from the need or yearning of being somewhere other than "this side the ground" to putting the "late year" behind him, and looking hopefully into the future, and finally, being overwhelmed to "weeping" by the beauty of the earth on "this shining night."

## **Musical Elements**

The work is firmly grounded in D-flat major, but the first measures of the primary theme are pentatonic. The main theme would be easy to learn on solfège or neutral syllables.<sup>35</sup> The soprano range extends down to a low A and often has repeated lower notes, which access a desired "ethereal" atmosphere. Sopranos also soar to a high A-flat, and in another long phrase climb to a G-flat. These register changes must be sung with consistent placement and space so that all notes sound with ease on the same linear plane.

Lauridsen makes use of every texture from unison to all parts divisi. The dynamic structure that Lauridsen notates is a challenge for both the conductor and the ensemble, due to its constant changing and moving nature. It is important for the pianissimo sections to be sung with just as much energy and space as the climax of the piece.

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<sup>35</sup> Albinder, 445.



## **Form and Structure**

The structure is AA'BCA''Coda.<sup>36</sup> The piano introduction sets up the tonality of the piece and is followed by the introduction of the theme in tenors and basses. Section A' begins with sopranos and altos on the main theme and tenors and basses present secondary melodic material. The tenors and basses present the B section in unison. Section C builds to the climax of the piece before it returns to the A theme, sung by the basses and followed by imitative counterpoint. Finally, the work ends with a suspended harmonic moment and a D-flat major resolution.

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<sup>36</sup> Albinder, 445.

## **How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place (Wie Lieblich sind deine Wohnungen)**

### **Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)**

Johannes Brahms was born in Hamburg, Germany and spent his younger years learning piano, giving his first public performance at age 10.<sup>37</sup> Brahms began composing for a local choral ensemble, and also developed an interest in gypsy music that he had heard from the Hungarian refugees who had come to Germany in 1848. He was influenced by the music of Bach and Handel, and Robert Schumann became his mentor and close friend.<sup>38</sup> Brahms held many choir director and conducting positions throughout his life, some in his hometown of Hamburg, and many in Vienna, Austria. Brahms' choral music is unique because much of it reflects a deep felt personal despondency about life. His music also often contained canonic technique, no doubt stemming from his influences of Renaissance and Baroque music.<sup>39</sup>

### **Composition**

*Wie Lieblich sind deine Wohnungen* is the fourth movement from Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem, Op. 45*. In the *Requiem*, the soprano melody at the opening of this movement is an exact inversion of the orchestral melody that precedes it.<sup>40</sup> He composed *Ein Deutsches Requiem* between 1857, the year Robert Schumann died, and 1868, and he added the fifth movement in 1869. It is

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<sup>37</sup> Shrock, 474.

<sup>38</sup> Shrock, 474.

<sup>39</sup> Shrock, 475.

<sup>40</sup> Shrock, 476.

said that in 1864, Brahms sent Clara Schumann a copy of *Wie Lieblich sind deine Wohnungen*, and apologized for its presumed weakness.<sup>41</sup> Brahms conducted the premiere of the work (excluding the fifth movement) in Bremen on Good Friday, April 10, 1868.<sup>42</sup> The text of this movement comes from Psalm 84:1-2, 4. The work, including this movement is scored for SATB and orchestra, with piano reductions available in many editions.

### **Historical Perspective**

Brahms commented that he would have preferred to replace the word, "German" in the title with "Human," making his work entitled, *A Requiem for Humanity*. The text throughout consists of verses about peace and comfort.<sup>43</sup> A requiem is meant to be a consoling of the bereaved and a peaceful deposition of the souls of the departed. *Ein Deutsches Requiem* was Brahms' only Requiem he ever composed. Sometimes, it is called the *Brahms Requiem*.

### **Technical Considerations**

Each voice part must be strong because all four of them carry an equal amount of melodic and harmonic material. Typical of Brahms, the ranges extend quite a bit, and could provide challenges for undeveloped or untrained voices. The sweeping legato phrases move along at a moderate tempo that most singers

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<sup>41</sup> Shrock, 476.

<sup>42</sup> Abrahams, 474.

<sup>43</sup> Shrock, 476.

are able to sustain. Keeping vowels open and forward will help the singers to sustain each phrase.

The original accompaniment consists of an orchestra, and in one section, the violins have a moving eighth note line outlining the harmony in each measure. If the score is a piano reduction, the accompanist will need adequate time to prepare.

Consider the German text and the challenges it presents, especially with the text that is set on the faster moving paired eighth notes. An ensemble may find it helpful to sing first on a neutral syllable.<sup>44</sup>

### **Stylistic Considerations**

Within the structure, there are two verses that use imitation counterpoint, which should be performed in the style of a fugue. Although many publications only incorporate an English translation, it is encouraged to perform the work in its original language. *Wie Lieblich sind deine Wohnungen* is the fourth and center movement in the requiem and in comparison to the other movements is one of the lightest and sweetest sounding compositions.

### **Musical Elements**

The dynamic structure is an analysis that the conductor must rehearse and decide upon before introducing the piece. The range of the soprano part soars to a forte A-flat, and often to a held high G. There are many different

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<sup>44</sup> Abrahams, 474.

textures present throughout the song: homophony, polyphony and imitation. The articulations in the accompaniment begin with a smooth legato section, and change throughout, with pizzicato sections, *fp* markings and staccato.

Brahms uses tonalities to express the lyrics. For example, there is movement towards G-flat major in measure 72 after the text: "My body and soul rejoice in the living God." The C section, "immerdar," is expressed in the extended imitative section that ends with a chord tied over 4 measures at measure 149.

### **Form and Structure**

The form is a mirror formal structure of ABACA' and stands in the middle of the Requiem.<sup>45</sup> The text is through-composed, but the melody set for the first line, *Wie Lieblich sind deine Wohnungen*, is repeated between each successive verse and the final phrase. The final verse is a fugato setting.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Shrock, 477.

<sup>46</sup> Abrahams, 475.

## **Bogoroditse Devo**

### **Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1944)**

Rachmaninoff was born near St Petersburg in Russia, emigrated from Russia during the October 1917 Revolution,<sup>47</sup> moved to Stockholm, Copenhagen, and finally settled in New York City.<sup>48</sup> Although not popular right away, he injected a new vitality into nineteenth century music and became a great composer of the century. His choral works became known later, as his piano concertos and symphonies took precedence in popularity. He composed his first choral work at age 17, a Latin motet called *Deus meus*. Rachmaninoff studied at the Moscow Conservatory where he met Tchaikovsky. His three most important choral works were composed between 1910 and 1915: the *Liturgy of St John Chrysostom (Liturgiia Sv Ioanna Zlatousta)*, *The Bells (Kolokola)* and the *All-Night Vigil (Vsenoshchnoye bdeniye)*.<sup>49</sup> In the 1920's, he toured Europe and the USA as a concert pianist. His choral repertoire consists of both sacred and secular genres.

### **Composition**

*Bogoroditse Devo* hails from the *All Night Vigil, Op. 37, No. 6*, also commonly known as Rachmaninoff's Vespers. The entire Vespers was composed in two weeks during January and February 1915. The Moscow Synodal Choir premiered the Vespers and the performance was well-received.

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<sup>47</sup> Strimple, 132.

<sup>48</sup> Shrock, 521.

<sup>49</sup> Shrock, 521.

There are 15 movements within the work and nine of them are based on chant. *Bogoroditse Devo* is movement six in the Vespers and it became the most popular of Rachmaninoff's compositions during the twentieth century. The Vigil, over an hour of a cappella music, was intended for a night-long service in Russian Orthodox churches on the eve of a holy day. The Vespers, specifically the fifth movement, was one of Rachmaninoff's own favorite compositions.<sup>50</sup>

### **Historical Perspective**

The Vespers was written around the same time as Rachmaninoff's other most popular pieces. It was said that this piece is "undoubtedly a contribution of great importance to the church,"<sup>51</sup> because of how artful and romantic Rachmaninoff transformed the simple chants. *Bogoroditse Devo* is often extracted and performed separately.

### **Technical Considerations**

A firm understanding of the pronunciation of the Church Slavonic text is necessary before tackling this piece. The text is translated from Cyrillic script. Vowel unification will be of utmost importance to an ensemble, and coloring the sound to fit the SSAATTBB texture will lead to the most convincing performances of this movement in the Vespers. Using lip rounding and shaping the sound in a physical sense will help the singers unify the vowel. The moving eighth notes will

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<sup>50</sup> Michael Steinberg, *Choral Masterworks*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 238-242.

<sup>51</sup> Shrock, 522.

have a tendency to sound march-like and too stiff if the ensemble does not devote effort to the dynamic nuances of each phrase, as well as word stress. Ending the last chord held at *ppp* will require breath support and control. Ask the ensemble to imagine the energy needed for *forte*, and to sing the softer dynamics with the same energy and space. Encourage singers to keep the sound spinning as the dynamic fades.

The height of *Bogoroditse Devo* is an impactful moment in the work. The crescendo in the 6/4 bar happens quickly from *piano* to *fortissimo* within 5 beats. All parts are on the same vowel [a], and then the moment continues with altos and basses on unison octave moving eighth notes, and sopranos and tenors sustaining at the height of their comfortable ranges. In a church setting, the tonality and harmonic strength of this section resonates, creating a wall of sound and deep emotional impact. Have singers imagine the space around them and “fill up” the sound to achieve the impact.

### **Stylistic Considerations**

The Vespers, based on chants, are prayers. The best performance practice is to experience singing this in a church. *Bogoroditse Devo* would have been sung in a cathedral during an all-night service. The mindful, peaceful atmosphere that a large European cathedral like the beautiful St Petersburg churches would encourage, is the same mindfulness that should begin and end this piece. The text is the Russian setting of Ave Maria, (Rejoice, O virgin).



## **Musical Elements**

*Bogoroditse Devo* is set in F major for a cappella chorus. The shape of each phrase and the length of each phrase varies, and is given musical life through the dynamic markings, crescendos and descendos. The movement begins at *piano*, and ends at *ppp*. Much of the texture is homophonic, or voicings are doubled with soprano and tenor together, and alto and bass together. The altos, *divisi*, are featured with the melody at measure 14. Overall, the timbre should match the deep, moving texture with tall, dark vowels and breadth in the sound.

## **Form and Structure**

Form is ABC. There are 3 main sections, the first two sections, longer, and the last section exists as an ending. The text, translated is:

*Rejoice, virgin mother of God,  
Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.  
Blessed are you among women,  
and blessed is the fruit of your womb,  
for you have borne the Savior of our souls.<sup>52</sup>*

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<sup>52</sup> Choral Public Domain Library, "Bogoroditse Devo," Barry Johnston, [http://www3.cpd.org/wiki/index.php/Bogoroditse\\_Devo\\_%28Sergei\\_Rachmaninoff%29](http://www3.cpd.org/wiki/index.php/Bogoroditse_Devo_%28Sergei_Rachmaninoff%29), (accessed May 4, 2016).

## *O Occhi Manza Mia*

### Orlando di Lasso (1532-1594)

Orlando di Lasso (also known as Orlande de Lassus) was born in 1532 in a Franco-Flemish territory that is now part of Belgium. As a young boy, he was known for his beautiful singing voice. He composed much of his music in France and Italy. He became the maestro di cappella at San Giovanni in Laterano, and after one year continued on his travels and finally settled in Antwerp in 1554 or 1555. Around the same time, he composed his collection of madrigals, chansons, and motets, the so-called "Opus 1" that was published and helped to launch his career onto the international stage.<sup>53</sup> He took over leadership of the court of Duke Albrecht V of Bavaria in Munich and stayed there until his death in 1594. During his stay in Munich, he became known as one of the main exponents of polyphony in the Renaissance. His works include both sacred and secular and cover a variety of genres and languages, including larger works like Passions and masses, although no instrumental works. As he became more well-known, he attracted many student composers to Munich including Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli.<sup>54</sup>

### Composition

Lassus likely composed *O Occhi, manza mia* in Naples, and it was later published in Antwerp in 1581. It is classified as a villanelle, and was set to

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<sup>53</sup> Albinder, 164.

<sup>54</sup> Shrock, 113.

lighthearted poetry. This secular genre adopted Neapolitan street songs.<sup>55</sup> The words include word play, humor, and double entendre. Lasso arranged the voice parts so that the melody in the top voice was moved to the tenor part. This particular piece was probably a *villanesca* that he learned as a young man in Naples. Lasso decided to use only the first verse out of four in the original villanelle text.

### **Historical Perspective**

The complete name for this genre is the *canzona villanesca alla napolitana*, but is known as *villanesca*. Villanesca are practically synonymous with villanelle, villanelle and villota, all deriving from the Latin meaning of “peasant.” A typical villanelle is scored for 3 voices with the melody in the top voice. The practice of arranging villanesche had been established by Adriano Willaert and Lasso’s arrangement follows his style: the melody is moved from the top voice to the tenor. This allows for a more balanced harmonization.

### **Technical Considerations**

The majority of this piece is homophonic with simple rhythms. The melody in the tenor part will require some attention to balance and harmony by having the other voice parts learn the melody so that they can listen for the melody while they are singing. Most of the harmonies are easily understood, but in the middle section sequential passage, singers should focus on tuning the unexpected

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<sup>55</sup> Albinder, 164.

harmonies, by holding each note or count-singing under tempo. It may also help to use a neutral syllable to tune this passage. In one instance at measure 5, “mia” is set on one note, in which case it should be sung on the stressed first vowel longer, then released gracefully and unaccented on the second vowel.<sup>56</sup>

### **Stylistic Considerations**

In a typical villanesca, the harmonic language and voice leading were purposefully unlearned and parallel fifths were sometimes used as a way of imitating untrained musicians. The villanesca is meant to be fun to perform and listen to. It has its roots in common speech and uses jargon for humorous purposes. Some words might not be familiar to a typical Italian translator because they come from a certain dialect. “Tienemi mente” means “remember me,” and “manza” omits the a- from “amanza,” meaning “beloved.”

On the score, it should be noted that the Italian was modernized, barlines were added, and the parts were transposed to modern clefs. Word stress should take precedence over strong beats, since Lassus did not write the music with bar lines.<sup>57</sup> Many of Lassus’s compositions reflect the style of Palestrina and the Renaissance.

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<sup>56</sup> Albinder, 164.

<sup>57</sup> Albinder, 165.

### **Musical Elements**

*O Occhi Manza Mia* contains numerous instances of word painting with expressive settings of *a me*, to sound like a sigh or like pleading, and *contiento*, is held out and sustained. Singers should learn to tune octave unisons wherever they occur to aid tuning each harmony in the texture. Balance will be a major focus as the ensemble may need time to get used to hearing the melody in the tenor part.

### **Form and Structure**

The text is a couplet with a refrain. The music is structured in AABCC form, the typical form of a villanesca.<sup>58</sup> Each section has 2 phrases, unequal in length.

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<sup>58</sup> Albinder, 165.

## **Psallite unigenito**

### **Michael Praetorius (1571-1621)**

Michael Praetorius was a German-born composer who studied at the University of Frankfurt and in 1587 was appointed organist at the church of St. Marien. He travelled extensively and took several temporary positions in various cities in Germany. Praetorius composed about 1500 sacred vocal works that were published during his lifetime. Some of his later publications contain works in *seconda prattica* styles. His compositions are some of the most performed works of the German Renaissance, and he is most well known for his treatise, *Syntagma musicum*, a study of church music and performance practice.<sup>59</sup>

### **Composition**

*Psallite unigenito* is part of volume six of the series entitled *Musae Sioniae*, issued from 1605-1610, and devoted to chorale and Lutheran liturgy. Volume six consists of short, homophonic and strophic settings. Also in volume six is the famous *Lo, how a rose e'er blooming*. Both *Psallite* and *Lo, How a Rose* are Christmas carols. *Psallite* has text in both German and Latin. The text author is anonymous, but most likely predates Praetorius' setting of it.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Shrock, 130-132.

<sup>60</sup> Abrahams, 134.

### **Historical Perspective**

At the time of publication, Praetorius held the position of organist and court Kapellmeisters for Duke Heinrich Julius of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel. The Reformation was introduced in 1591, and Praetorius' music was in high demand, based mostly on Protestant and Lutheran hymns. The performance forces around this time were six to eight singers with equal instrumentalist representation. This piece was written in Praetorius's prime as a composer, yet it was before he incorporated the *seconda prattica* style in his music.

### **Technical Considerations**

This is a wonderful piece to incorporate language, and sacred Renaissance music in a program for beginning to intermediate choirs. At the brisk tempo, the section in German is quite a mouthful with consonants flying by, but manageable with practice. Get comfortable with speaking the words fluently before adding the pitches and tempo. The rhythms are limited to eighth notes, quarter notes, half notes, and whole notes. The only more challenging rhythm is in the opening imitative entrance of each part occurs off the beat.

### **Stylistic Considerations**

*Psallite* is meant to be a joyous Christmas carol, so although the 4-beat pattern is strong, there needs to be a more light-hearted character in the singing. It is sung a cappella, but it would be reflective of the Renaissance to add a

consort of instruments doubling the vocal parts. The middle German section tells a more gentle story of the tiny child laying in the crib with angels singing sweetly around, which provides contrast in the more jubilant cry of *Psallite!*

### **Musical Elements**

The motive on the phrase *Psallite* is a descending perfect fourth. The entire song could be easily taught on solfege, since the harmonies are all very straight-forward in G major. (However, the version found on the Choral Public Domain is in F major.) Most of the texture is homophonic, especially on the running eighth notes on *Redemptori domino*. The moments of polyphony mostly happen on the imitative “*Psallite!*” motive and occur off the beat.<sup>61</sup> There are no dynamics written into the score, but the character of the two languages and sections reflect that the Latin sections are more bold, rhythmic, and heavy, and the German section is lighter and more legato.

### **Form and Structure**

The form of this piece is ABA'. The Latin section is followed by a more legato German section, and then the opening motive returns, overlapping with the German phrase. It ends with another Latin section, almost identical to the first, and ends with a fermata sustaining a major tonic chord. The German section is constructed from 2 duets, first in the soprano and alto, then in the tenor and bass.

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<sup>61</sup> Abrahams, 136.



## **Hallelujah, Amen**

### **George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)**

Handel was born in 1685, the same year as Bach, in Germany, and died in England in 1759. Although his father wanted him to become a lawyer, he moved to Hamburg when he was nineteen to play for the Hamburg Opera. There, he composed some of his first operas. In 1706, he moved to Italy to compose, and also spent some time living in Germany. Most of his life was spent in England. His compositions include operas, oratorios, and choral works in five different languages.<sup>62</sup> His two most popular and well-known oratorios were *Judas Maccabaeus* and *Messiah*. While he was in England, he also composed numerous occasional works such as *Water Music* and *Music for the Royal Fireworks*.<sup>63</sup>

### **Composition**

*Hallelujah, Amen* was composed as a chorus within the oratorio, *Judas Maccabaeus*, written in 1746. The oratorio uses biblical text, and was one of the most popular oratorios of the eighteenth century.<sup>64</sup> *Judas Maccabaeus* was performed more frequently than any other of Handel's oratorios, performed thirty-three times in the years following its completion!<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Abrahams, 215.

<sup>63</sup> Shrock, 327.

<sup>64</sup> Shrock, 328.

<sup>65</sup> Shrock, 331.

## **Historical Perspective**

The words in the oratorio were chosen to parallel the sentiments of the *Occasional Oratorio* and to connect biblical and contemporary English characters. The character of Judas Maccabeus represented the Duke of Cumberland, so the librettist, Morell's text was designed to glorify the duke upon his victory from the battle of Culloden in Scotland.<sup>66</sup> The story is based on I Maccabees 2-8, where Judas Maccabaeus and his brother Simon defend Israel's right against the Syrians to worship their God instead of false idols.<sup>67</sup>

## **Technical Considerations**

The advantage of *Hallelujah, Amen* is that the motive appears first in the bass, but the motive then appears in all voices, so it is wise to teach the melody in unison! Teach the singers to listen for this important melodic phrase throughout, given that it is the most important in the texture. Have singers stand when they sing that line. The word "Hallelujah" appears often with a rhythm that stresses the ending syllable instead of the "lu" syllable. Likewise, the *Amen* section at the end does provide a naturally musical stress on "AH-men," and this should be emphasized.

Ending syllables should be clean. One way to get the "s" at the end of "Rejoice" cut off cleanly is to have singers touch the "s" like it is a hot skillet. A

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<sup>66</sup> Shrock, 331-332.

<sup>67</sup> Shrock, 337.

quick breath should follow the rhythmic release so that the tempo does not drag on in this section.<sup>68</sup>

On the briskly moving melismas, it may be appropriate to add a subtle, bouncy “h” on the pitches with no consonant. On the text “oh Judah,” when it goes to a homophonic texture, provides a smoother contrast to the faster moving, detached notes of the beginning and ending.

### **Stylistic Considerations**

The articulations should be presently crisply and the tempo is marked *Allegro, a tempo giusto*, by Handel. The overall sound is light and detached, but with healthy breath support. Ornamentation of the phrases is appropriate at the cadences. Typically, the bass aria would follow *Hallelujah, Amen*, and if at all possible, should be included in performances to give the text meaning and context.

### **Musical Elements**

The word “rejoice” is consistently placed on a melisma with faster moving notes, which make it sound like it is celebrating! The score is in D major, and the ranges fit choirs of any age. Constantly changing rhythms and polyphonic sections provide a feasible challenge to singers. It requires that the singers listen, but also hold an independent part with confidence. Many of the phrases are short, but need to have the feel of being connected. Singers could use

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<sup>68</sup> Abrahams, 216.

movement to show how the shorter phrases connect into longer phrases, even though rests are present in the score.

### **Form and Structure**

*Hallelujah, Amen* is through-composed and is extremely short in length.

The opening motive appears throughout the song in different voice parts, and each line of text begins a new melody. Aside from the *Hallelujah, Amen* opening line, the other two sections are mostly homophonic in texture. The original score was for SATB, two trumpets, two oboes, timpani, two violins and a viola, and basso continuo. Many editions have a piano reduction of the supporting rhythmic and moving accompaniment.

## *Ave Verum Corpus*

### Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Mozart was born in Salzburg, Austria in 1756. He is known for his talent at a very young age, playing piano at the age of 4, and composing his first work in 1761. His father and teacher, Leopold, was also a musician and composer in the court of the prince-bishop of Salzburg. Mozart earned a prestigious position in the court at age sixteen, as *Konzertmeister*, and after a number of years, Mozart left to move to Vienna to compose, and he married Constanza Weber in 1782.<sup>69</sup> After a brief illness during a trip to Prague, he died two months before his thirty-sixth birthday.<sup>70</sup> Mozart's output of music during his short life was significant. He composed nineteen masses and one Requiem, eight large sacred works, twenty motets, one oratorio, and seven cantatas. In addition, he composed operas, piano sonatas, orchestral, and chamber music.

### Composition

*Ave verum corpus*, K. 618, is an accompanied motet and was Mozart's final composition.<sup>71</sup> This piece is also his most familiar motet and his most frequently performed choral work. Mozart composed *Ave Verum* in June 1791 in Baden, Austria, for the summer feast of Corpus Christi, the Thursday following Trinity Sunday.<sup>72</sup> The accompaniment is written for strings and organ. This

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<sup>69</sup> Abrahams, 184.

<sup>70</sup> Shrock, 375.

<sup>71</sup> Shrock, 378.

<sup>72</sup> Abrahams, 185.

composition was written for Anton Stoll, the choirmaster at Baden, and was Mozart's first piece of sacred music since abandoning the C-Minor Mass in 1783.<sup>73</sup>

### **Historical Perspective**

The feast of Corpus Christi was important in Austria, and it included a community procession that stopped in front of four stations. It was intended to unite Mother Church with Mother Earth. Mozart may have composed this music to create a new style of more simplistic, unadorned, and easily understood church music.<sup>74</sup> *Ave Verum Corpus* was first performed in the church of the Baden parish in Austria. During Mozart's life, it was more common to have an unaccompanied motet, but the accompanied motet became an established part of the literature beginning in the Baroque era.<sup>75</sup>

### **Technical Considerations**

The rhythms and homophonic texture is simple. Mozart does not provide any dynamic markings, but he labels the opening *sotto voce*. As this would be used at a service, singers should maintain a peaceful, soft dynamic, but yet, one that is strong and connected to the breath for sustaining the long *adagio* phrases. The melody remains in the soprano line. Sopranos should listen carefully in the

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<sup>73</sup> Steinberg, 212.

<sup>74</sup> Abrahams, 185.

<sup>75</sup> Abrahams, 185.

ensemble so as to not overwhelm the other three accompanying voices.<sup>76</sup>

Singers, especially in the soprano melody line, who carry too much tension will have a tendency to push sharp, so phrases should be relaxed, spacious, forward and resonant. Tuning and balance of all four voices is important.

The conductor beat pattern should be felt in two, as this is marked in cut time, however some phrases may need a subdivision and a 4 beat pattern to show what is necessary. Phrases should last four measures. Some interpretations may prove to benefit from a lift or quick breath at punctuation marks. Singers should think of the large leap in the melody as if it were on the same linear plane as the lower note, and connect with plenty of air and support. Tempo is important, and while it should have a sense of forward movement, it also should not rush.

Although it is helpful to achieve security in each part by rehearsing separately, all voices must understand how they fit into the harmony, especially in the more chromatic sections, such as measure 39-41 near the end of the piece. Moving from note to note slowly will assist the ensemble in hearing the harmonic changes.

### **Stylistic Considerations**

Mozart composed this piece in a markedly more simple style than his earlier compositions. Dynamics should not be extreme (none were marked by

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<sup>76</sup> Abrahams, 185.

Mozart), and tempo should be held conservatively. Although the melody is very expressive in nature, the lines should be smooth and not over-done.

Because Mozart composed this piece in Austria, it is likely that the timbres and sounds of the Austro-German Latin were what he had in mind. In order to reflect Mozart's intentions, it is encouraged to use the pronunciation of the Austro-German Latin.<sup>77</sup>

### **Musical Elements**

The harmonies are plain, the texture is simple, and in fact, *Ave Verum* is known as the "essence of utter simplicity."<sup>78</sup> Sometimes, the accompaniment doubles the choral voicing, but it is also independent of the vocal lines. The organ (or piano/strings) provides a four-measure introduction and a four-measure ending cadence. The accompaniment is written like a chorale or hymn accompaniment in 4 parts.

The word *mortis*, is likely painted in the text in the most chromatic descending section in the work at measure 39.

### **Form and Structure**

The form of *Ave Verum Corpus* is ABC. Section A from measure 1-21 begins in D major and then shifts to the dominant, A major. Section B is more chromatic, in A major, modulating to F major and ending on a dominant seven chord of D major. Section C begins at measure 30 and returns to D major

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<sup>77</sup> Abrahams, 186.

<sup>78</sup> Steinberg, 212.



## **Savory, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme**

### **Donald Patriquin (b. 1938)**

Donald Patriquin is a composer, organist, and a choral conductor. He is known internationally for his choral and instrumental arrangements of folk music. He graduated from McGill and Toronto Universities where he studied composition with Istvan Anhalt, who was once a pupil of Bartok and Kodaly. Patriquin is well known for his folk music arrangements and his works for children's choir.<sup>79</sup> Many of his works are based on folksongs and carols from his homeland, Canada.<sup>80</sup> He now is a freelance composer and conductor and works from his native Eastern Township in Quebec, Canada.<sup>81</sup>

### **Composition**

Savory, Sage, Rosemary, and Thyme highlights the influence of British folk music on the culture of British Columbia, Canada, and is the final piece in a set of *Six Songs of Early Canada*. The set of songs were written in 1980 and finished in 1992, formed to highlight traditional folk songs all around the country of Canada from British Columbia in the west, to Newfoundland in the northeast. Havergal College Choir in Toronto, Canada commissioned the work. This

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<sup>79</sup> Donald Patriquin, composer, "Biography,"  
<http://www.donaldpatriquin.com/Bio.html>, (accessed May 3, 2016).

<sup>80</sup> Abrahams, 147.

<sup>81</sup> Patriquin, "Biography."

particular text is the last in the series and is derived from a folksong from British Columbia that originated in England.<sup>82</sup>

### **Historical Perspective**

The six songs in this series are arranged historically and geographically. Donald Patriquin has professionally studied, experienced and compiled these folksongs to arrange them in a musical way that upholds the rich cultural history that they hold. Similar lyrics were used in a song by Simon and Garfunkel in the 1950's, but the origin of that song is different from Patriquin's arrangement.

### **Technical Considerations**

*Savory, Sage, Rosemary, and Thyme* is voiced SSAA, with piano and woodblock. The ensemble and conductor should focus on the contrast between the sections, as each has a particular function within the piece. Discussions that give singers an idea of how the expression changes will benefit the piece. The rhythms of the melody flow naturally with the stress of the words in each verse in 6/8 time. The meter occasionally changes to 9/8. The feel of the piece is brisk and bright, almost dance-like, as it is marked *Gaily* at the beginning of the score. The piano accompaniment is challenging with lots of moving notes and wide leaps. The accompanist would benefit from being a part of the discussions of contrasts, as well, because of the large part it plays in setting each one.

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<sup>82</sup> Abrahams, 147.

### **Stylistic Considerations**

The meaning of the text, is a ballad of a man asking his lady to perform almost impossible tasks, and then the rhyming refrain of “savory, sage, rosemary and thyme” is included after each question is asked because these herbs have a history of having medical or supernatural powers, since the medieval times.<sup>83</sup>

The text originally comes from the traditional English ballad, *Scarborough Faire*. In fact, Patriquin takes the same contour of that melody and places it in a major key and at a brisk tempo. It is designed to have a lighter more playful feel than that of the dark sounding original melody.

### **Musical Elements**

*Savory, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme* is in the bright key of D-major.

There is very little chromaticism, though it does appear in the later verses. The melody is harmonized by parallel fifths in some sections as well. The blossoming phrases should be expressive and the tone color sparkling and varied for each section. To achieve the correct tone color, ask singers to color the sound with different shades in mind. For example, a grassy green (bright) tone would be favored over a dark chocolate color or a (too bright) fire engine red!

For all six verses, specific dynamic and expressive markings are used, creating a sense of theme and variation as the melody returns.<sup>84</sup> The texture is

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<sup>83</sup> One Writer’s Way, “*The History and Romance Behind ‘Scarborough Fair,’*” Beth Trissel, <https://bethtrissel.wordpress.com/2011/01/23/are-you-going-to-scarborough-fair/>, (accessed May 7, 2016).

<sup>84</sup> Abrahams, 148.

mostly homophonic, sometimes even in unison, but the later verses have more independent vocal lines in imitation of one another.

### **Form and Structure**

The form of the work is theme and variation with an introduction, a short interlude in the middle, and a coda at the end. The piece is set up in 6 verses, and each has a slightly different setting with regard to harmony, vocal lines and texture, dynamic and expression. The piano plays a few measures with running sixteenth notes spanning a wide range for an introduction, and every verse is marked with a rhythmic interlude in the piano accompaniment.

## New Year Carol

### Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Benjamin Britten was an English composer, and has composed music for orchestra and choir, films, radio, and opera. His compositions, especially his extensive choral output, made him one of the most successful English composers in the twentieth century. Britten grew up in Suffolk where he composed more than one hundred pieces by age fourteen, and his mother thought him to be the next famous “B” of the composers, following in Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms company. He studied music at the Royal College of Music, and was drawn to the a cappella choral genre during his time as a student. Some of his most famous works are the *War Requiem*, which he dedicated to soldiers who died in World War II, as well as *A Ceremony of Carols*, and *A Hymn to St Cecilia*. He often collaborated with tenor, Peter Pears, who became his life partner,<sup>85</sup> and together they spent time in the US and Canada. Britten was responsible for a diverse repertoire output including opera, choral and orchestral work, and film and stage music. He aimed to “restore the musical setting of the English language to brilliance, freedom, and vitality that have been curiously rare since the death of Purcell.”<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Shrock, 696.

<sup>86</sup> Mehaffey, 174.

## **Composition**

*Friday Afternoons* is a set of twelve songs that Britten dedicated to his brother and he wrote them between the years of 1933 and 1935. It was also dedicated to the boys of Clive House prep school in Prestatyn, where choir practice usually took place on Friday afternoons. Each song was composed in England at a time in between two world wars. The songs reflect a time of innocence and childhood times. Most of them are short and beautiful. The melody of this piece is simple and is repeated throughout the piece.

The text of *A New Year Carol* comes from *Tom Tiddler's Ground: A Book of Poetry for the Junior and Middle Schools*, edited and compiled by Walter de la Mare.<sup>87</sup>

## **Historical Perspective**

This was Britten's first experimentation with writing for children's voices. This song was originally a carol with references to light and water that was for the Feast of Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. There is some disagreement of where this celebration originated and how it was celebrated. What most scholars argue is that the text relates to a Wales tradition where on New Years' morning, boys carried water and branches of evergreen and sprinkled faces, hands, rooms and doors with water from the well before the dawn of the New Year to bring luck to the people. In return, the people would give the boys coins. The text might

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<sup>87</sup> Mehaffey, 174.

have been something the boys would sing as a carol as they carried the water from door to door.<sup>88</sup>

### **Technical Considerations**

Singers should understand and take control of the breath, spinning air through the legato phrases. The melody is all within the scale, and can be rehearsed in all parts using solfege or neutral syllable. The lower and upper parts, when they split, have to deal with some voice crossing. Singers should know that they may be singing higher than the top voice part on some notes. The large ascending leaps, such as on “wires” should be well-prepared with supported breath and space. The dynamic push and pull also requires good air control. As the dynamics get softer, do not slow the tempo. Singers could practice the melody on a lip trill to get an idea of how much air to use.

The language used in the text contains many words that a typical 21<sup>st</sup> century choir would not be familiar with. An important part of rehearsal will be to discuss the text and understand the meaning. Take time to delve into the history of the text,<sup>89</sup>

In the final section, the descant part may want to change to a neutral syllable to keep it spacious and in tune. The words “levy dew” are not ideal in

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<sup>88</sup> Mehaffey, 174.

<sup>89</sup>Mainly Norfolk: English folk and other good music, “New Year Carol/Residue,” <https://mainlynorfolk.info/watersons/songs/residue.html>, (accessed May 7, 2016).

that range for young voices, and it has a tendency to sound pushed or the vowel to be too broad.

### **Stylistic Considerations**

An English sounding pronunciation would be preferred as the text reflects that British timbre, bright and forward. Consonants should be crisp and light, and vowels should be tall.<sup>90</sup> The piano accompaniment is reflective of moving water and there should be an overall feeling of movement, purity and beauty in the sound.

### **Musical Elements**

*New Year Carol* is in E-flat major, sometimes showing tendencies toward F minor. The dynamic structure of crescendos through the height of the phrase and decrescendos to the end is notable in this piece. It is important for the conductor to show the phrase shape, breath, and connection and support for the long, ascending phrases. For the sopranos (top voice), they only have one melody to learn that is repeated 3 times, with an ending. The other two voices have to learn the counter melodies that turn the contour of the line in the opposite direction. It is perfectly acceptable to have the choir sing this in unison throughout.

The voice parts cross, while the intervals are mostly triadic and move in the same general phrase shape. The entire tune is within an octave, while the

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<sup>90</sup> Mehaffey, 175.



sopranos soar above with a counter melody in the last verse. The piano accompaniment supports the melody of the voice parts harmonically.

### **Form and Structure**

The form is strophic, in 3 sections:

1. Piano intro + unison melody statement
2. Soprano and Soprano accompanying with voice crossing
3. SSA—soprano 1 trades off melody with soprano II until the end

## **Letter from a Girl to the World**

### **Andrea Ramsey**

Andrea Ramsey is a composer, conductor, and scholar, currently on faculty at the University of Colorado Boulder. Ramsey holds a Ph.D. in Music Education from Michigan State University, and an M.M. in choral conducting from University of Kansas. A native of Arkansas, she works with singers of all ages and has presented and guest conducted for many conventions and festivals of the American Choral Directors Association. She is also an active member of ACDA, CMS, and ASCAP. Having published over 90 choral works in print, she is also venturing into digital publishing via web-based music marketplace, [www.musicspoke.com](http://www.musicspoke.com).<sup>91</sup> Andrea believes strongly in the growth of young people as musicians and human beings through the experience of performing meaningful choral music.<sup>92</sup> Her repertoire spans a wide range of ensembles and ability levels.

### **Composition**

*Letter from a Girl to the World* was a commission composed for Bel Canto 2006-2007 of Washington Junior High School, in Bentonville, Arkansas, for their performance at the Arkansas All-State Music Conference. The girls in the choir, in seventh and eighth grade, responded to writing prompts, which make up the text

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<sup>91</sup> Andrea Ramsey, "Bio," <http://www.andream Ramsey.com/#about>, (accessed May 4, 2016).

<sup>92</sup> Santa Barbara Music Publishing, "Andrea Ramsey," <http://sbmp.com/ComposerPage.php?ComposerNum=11>, (accessed May 4, 2016).

of this piece. The experience of having students contribute was incredibly bonding, and greatly satisfying for the young singers to realize that other girls in the choir, though different from one another, all struggled with similar insecurities of hoping to be good enough, pretty enough, and worrying about the opinions of others.<sup>93</sup>

### **Historical Perspective**

The emotions and expression of the text of this piece is the most important, and it tells a timeless message of love, hope and dreams from the perspective of an adolescent young woman.

Andrea Ramsey's compositions have won numerous awards and many of her compositions, including this one, are found in reading sessions and All-State Repertoire lists.

### **Technical Considerations**

*Letter from a Girl to the World* is SSAA, with only percussion accompaniment. The percussion is a soft, but crisp, repetitive djembe and shaker part. It is possible, however, that the entire piece can be sung in 3 parts due to the soprano 1 and 2 singing together, the inner voices together, or the Altos singing together to combine forces. Much of the piece is in 2-part harmony. The

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<sup>93</sup> Andrea Ramsey, "Letter from a Girl to the World," <http://www.andreamsey.com/portfolio/letter-from-a-girl-to-the-world/>, (accessed May 4, 2016).

melody moves to and from all voice parts so each part gets to experience the melody at some point. The opening and closing sections provide a second “accompaniment” with the alto “tum” and “tu tu.” The dynamic structure and the shape of the melodic line paint the text beautifully as the young women share each emotion and question they have in their life. It would be helpful for students to work on the expression and phrasing of each individual melodic line as a group. This piece can inspire bonding and teamwork through the connection of the text.

The final section of *Letter from a Girl to the World*, the accompaniment parts are repeated and the soprano melody holds out an F4, while the harmonic progression repeat I-V, I-V. Meanwhile, student speakers enter and proclaim their hopes and dreams for their future and their world. Singers must use stagger breathing to create a texture underlying for the speakers. Have students write their own speaking lines to make it more authentic.

### **Stylistic Considerations**

A note on the score from the composer states that “singers are encouraged to create their own speaking parts to use in the place of some or all of the suggested ones printed in the score. This is welcomed and well within the vision of why this piece was created. Phrases should speak the realistic text through word stress and the rhythms in the lyrics. Singers should be aware of who has the melody at every given time, and be trained to listen to the melody,

not only for tuning, but for balance and to achieve the connection that this song is meant to provide.

### **Musical Elements**

The entire piece is set in the warm key of B-flat major. This warm tonality must not be over-sung, as inexperienced singers may have the tendency to push and go sharp. The alto parts descend to a low G at one point in the melody, which is almost more spoken than sung. The unison octaves with dancing and blossoming rhythmic figures of "Have you given us and chance to make you proud?" and "There are just so many questions inside me:" lead into each homophonic three-part section of "Do you know who I am?" and "Am I good enough?" The second of these sections is the climax of the piece, which is also the last homophonic section before ending with the speaking parts.

One element of contrast is articulation: for example in measure 34, the staccato markings over the dragged triplet figure, contrasted by the smooth, syncopated rhythm on the downbeat of the next measure. This happens again on the staccato release of "underneath" in measure 38, followed by a legato phrase. Dynamics build intensity to provide contrast in each section.

### **Form and Structure**

Ramsey's composition is through-composed, with some returning motives, rhythms, and melody lines. The opening phrase, "In my heart there are hopes

and dreams, and all different beautiful things,” is repeated again at the end in between the speaking parts. The text provides new questions and thoughts in each section. Each authentic cadence separates each new melody and lyric line. The two homophonic sections with the deeply personal questions like, “Do you know who I am?” and “Am I good enough?” are the features of this piece with stronger, more insistent rhythms and simple voice-led harmonies. The djembe highlights these sections by accenting the downbeat and letting the a cappella voices take over. The piece ends with speaking parts from the individuals in the ensemble, then fades away with a final “tum” on B-flat in the alto.

## **Arlequin dans sa boutique**

### **Earlene Rentz/Suzanne Byrnes**

Earlene Rentz (b. 1956), a native of Georgia, has taught music at all public school levels. She received her Bachelor's degree in Music Education from the University of Montevallo in Alabama and did her graduate work at Florida State University. Although her current work is as a freelance choral composer and arranger, she has taught courses at California State University, Long Beach, The University of Texas at Austin and Baylor University. In addition to her teaching career, she has conducted All-State choirs in Alabama, Georgia, Florida and Kentucky. Rentz currently has over 300 choral publications for all levels and ensembles.<sup>94</sup> Dr. Suzanne Rita Byrnes is a member of the current music education faculty at Florida State University. She is from Ottawa, Canada and her experience includes 12 years as the director of the Kansas City Children's Chorus.<sup>95</sup>

### **Composition**

This French folk song was known by all the Paris children who would go to the Guignol puppet shows. Guignol was a famous puppet created in Lyon, France in the early 1800's. The main character is Polichinelle, who is mentioned in the song. Polichinelle was in the earliest puppet shows and was a character

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<sup>94</sup> GIA Music, "Earlene Rentz," <https://www.giamusic.com/bios/earlene-rentz>, (accessed May 4, 2016).

<sup>95</sup> Florida State University School of Music, "The Director," Ensembles: Music in the Community, <http://www.music.fsu.edu/Ensembles/Music-in-the-Community/Capital-Children-s-Choir/The-Director>, (accessed May 4, 2016).

borrowed from the Italian commedia dell'arte. The English equivalent is Punch and Judy.

### **Historical Perspective**

This song is a children's song from France. This song goes back to the French Second Empire (1852 – 1870).<sup>96</sup> *Arlequin dans sa boutique* is a favorite French folk song and the melody is very similar to the original. In the song, the children tell the story of a clown who teaches music to the little helpers in the candy shop. Of the multiple verses that create *Arlequin dans sa boutique*, only the first verse is used in French in this arrangement; the second verse is used as well, but in an approximate English translation that Rentz and Byrnes created.

### **Technical Considerations**

Dr. Earlene Rentz provides an entire page inside the octavo, as well as online, of passages with no text that can be taught and rehearsed with solfege or neutral syllables. The five examples of passages within the song gradually get more difficult. This page serves as a fine tool to teach literacy. The repetitive rhythms can be sight-read even by a younger and less experienced ensemble. The melody often uses the perfect 4<sup>th</sup> intervals followed by step-wise motion. Each section has a fairly simple transition to the next. This is a simple two-part piece with imitation, and homophonic texture in almost every section. The voice

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<sup>96</sup> Monique Palomares, "Arlequin dans sa boutique," Lisa Yannucci, <http://www.mamalisa.com/?t=es&p=4154>, (accessed May 4, 2016).



ranges are accessible and fairly equal, except for a divisi on the final chord, which includes an optional high G! The five percussion parts and involved piano accompaniment provide a way to bring its playful character to life, musically.

Dr. Susanne Byrnes provides a helpful pronunciation guide. The conductor must be knowledgeable in French diction before presenting the text.

### **Stylistic Considerations**

The translation and pronunciation guide by Suzanne Byrnes included in the octavo will prove to be helpful in attaining the correct French diction. Special attention to the nasal vowels and mixed vowels, such as in “sur” will be important in order to authentically perform this song. Singers should keep a playful and light-hearted sound and expression. The piano adds to the mood with the detached rhythms, descending sixteenth notes, and octave leaps. No pedal should be used. There is an option of singing in English for the first verse as well, but it is highly suggested to attempt the French. With the rhyming words and repetitive melody, this song is feasible for any age group to successfully perform with the correct folksong style.

### **Musical Elements**

The piece begins in F major, and moves to G major for verse 2. The rhythmic motives appear throughout the piece and have a character of humor and play. There is one measure that changes from 4/4 to 2/4 time, and it is the

climax of the piece. Leading up to the climax, the two-part ensemble is singing an extended version of the chorus of the song in parallel 3rds, whereas before, it was imitative and on the same pitch. The piano part is complete with articulation and dynamic markings. The final note is the punch line of the song, going suddenly to *piano*, and then all percussion and the piano strike the last accented chord together on the final beat.

### **Form and Structure**

The form of this piece is Verse and Chorus. It begins verse 1 in unison with percussion and a repetitive rhythmic leap in the piano. The chorus consists of four measures in an imitative style. After a repeat of the verse and chorus, there is an interlude that is more like a partner song containing the words, *boutique, musique, Arlequin's shop*. The second verse is the same as the first at measure 18, but the top part continues with *Boutique, musique* as an accompaniment/descant. The chorus that follows leads to the key change. At this point, we hear new text (the second verse, in the original), but in English. Part two provides a harmony by turning the melody around and moving from tonic to dominant. The homophonic extended chorus is the climax of the song. *Arlequin dans sa Boutique* finishes in unison like the beginning, with the text of the first verse. This time, the *boutique, musique* interlude is homophonic. The song ends with the punchline *Arlequin's shop*. The song freely mixes French and English in each section.

## **Thula Klizeo**

### **Joseph Shabalala/MacDonnell (b. 1941)**

Joseph Shabalala was born in 1941 in Ladysmith, South Africa. He is most well known for forming the male a cappella isicathamiya group called Ladysmith Black Mambazo. Most of the music that he wrote was in the Zulu language, but as the genre of isicathamiya became more popular across geographic regions, he also wrote in other African languages and English. His goal is for his music to be a unifying force to bring people of different cultures together. His group, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, recorded albums in Africa, but following global recognition for his work with Paul Simon, they have recorded over 40 albums and have worked with some of the world's greatest musicians.

### **Composition**

It is said that Shabalala came up with this song while riding in a taxi in New York City<sup>97</sup> and he was feeling homesick and missing his children. It was written in 1987. The apartheid laws at this time may have made him feel that he could never return to his homeland. He thought of these words, which translated, mean "be still my heart—even here I am at home."<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Elizabeth Pauly. "Thula Klizeo Analysis," Doctor Liz Music, <http://www.doctorlizmusic.com/mctcchoirs/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Thula-Klizeo-analysis.pdf>, (accessed May 1, 2016).

<sup>98</sup> Sharon Grotto and Judith Herrington. "Thula Klizeo: Notes for the director." Pavane Publishing, [http://www.pavanepublishing.com/freedownloads/P1433\\_THULAKLIZEODirectorNotes.pdf](http://www.pavanepublishing.com/freedownloads/P1433_THULAKLIZEODirectorNotes.pdf), (accessed May 1, 2016).

### **Historical Perspective**

Written in 1989 by a living composer, the message of this song is relevant in the lives of people of all ages. It combines Zulu African text with English spoken text.

### **Technical Considerations**

Ensembles should learn the pronunciation of the text from the notes from the publisher's website. The 'k' should be pronounced, but mixed with more of a "g" sound on certain words, like "kaya." The arranger provides a helpful pronunciation guide. Most of the song is in unison, and the entire choir should do the percussive sounds. Younger choirs are capable of the ranges and harmonies, as well as the coordination of the body percussion, but the song must be memorized. Have the ensemble members start at a slower pace and gradually move towards performance tempo. Separating the footwork from the claps is also helpful in cleaning up the sound of the body percussion sections. It will take some practice to ease the transitions and the memorization of every section in the song. Rather than rehearsing each section separately, it is helpful to always create the context throughout rehearsal time by running from section to section.

Have singers in the soprano line prepare for the high F on page 5 by opening to a tall mouth shape and taking a quick low breath. They may need to adjust the vowel of "Hey" so that it is more open.

## **Stylistic Considerations**

In South Africa, isicathamiya, a secular a cappella style, is deep, resonant and smooth, and almost always includes a perfectly executed movement or gesture.<sup>99</sup> Singers should be loose and ready to move for the body percussion sections, with precision, neatness, and integrity of their appearance.<sup>100</sup> The expression of the meaning of the text in the English spoken section should be done with emotion. All of the vowels should be pure, especially the “oo” vowel on “Thula” and “Boomm.” Singers should bring their lips forward for these words.

## **Musical Elements**

In the key of F major, the ranges are appropriate for any age of choir. Breaking down the rhythm of the feet and claps will be imperative for a clean percussive sound. Accent markings on the syncopation help with the natural stress and rhythm of the Zulu words. Each section is marked with a specific dynamic, and crescendos through the short phrases are added in the final section. On a repeat of a phrase, the second time will be at a slightly louder, fuller dynamic than the previous. The tempo marking is “with energy” at 120 bpm.

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<sup>99</sup> Virginia Gorlinski. *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. "isicathamiya", <http://www.britannica.com/art/isicathamiya> (accessed May 01, 2016).

<sup>100</sup> Gorlinski, *isicathamiya*.

## **Form and Structure**

The form is a Theme and Variation. Each phrase within the theme is 2 measures long and is repeated in AABB form for each repetition of the melody. The form and structure of this piece is what makes it challenging for choirs. Each section is slightly different, and only some add body percussion. It begins with a call and response in the piano accompaniment, which features a syncopated, broken arpeggio, and the choir. That is followed by 2 repetitions of the theme in unison, the second one adds claps between each phrase. Then, it leads into the body percussion section, and a Boom-Boom-pa interlude. It returns to the melody, this time adding a harmony a major 3<sup>rd</sup> above. In the next section, the choir speaks the text in English in rhythm. It leads into the final section with harmony, then body percussion and the AA section of the melody repeated and fading away. The piano accompaniment is not for a beginner as it has many rhythms that do not mirror the vocal parts.

## **How Can I Keep From Singing?**

### **Ginger Littleton**

Ginger Littleton is an American composer and arranger. Her musical output consists of a small amount of choral works for young singers. Many of her songs are published and are best-sellers on the BriLee publishing website.

Some of her other works include an arrangement of “Who Can Sail,” “This Little Light of Mine,” and “Build Me a World,” which has earned its place in the choral library of many honorable children’s choirs such as the Bach Children’s Chorale.

### **Composition**

This piece takes a well-loved and powerful text and arranges it brilliantly for younger voices. *How Can I Keep from Singing* is originally a Quaker hymn. “The Quakers, also known as Friends, are a non-violent, peace-loving religious group.”<sup>101</sup> The text is not just about singing, but also about inner strength, hope, and facing adversity. “No matter how uncertain life is, there is a constant “song” throughout, if we only seek to hear it and to sing it, it echoes through our soul and gives us purpose in life.”<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Littleton, Ginger. *How Can I Keep from Singing?*

<sup>102</sup> Littleton, 2.

### **Historical Perspective**

Because the text is taken from a Quaker hymn, this song provides younger choirs with a text that requires more higher-level thinking than what is usually written by arrangers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Technical Considerations**

When preparing this piece, it is imperative to shape each longer phrase, by connecting the breath and carrying one word into another. Have singers mark in their music, which words should carry into the next.

Teach the opening unison theme using solfege or neutral syllable. Shape the tone by assuring that diphthongs remain one tall vowel until the change of words. All consonant endings should be released on the beat, sometimes making a dotted quarter note into a quarter note with a quarter rest. The repeating rhythm patterns also aid in the ease of learning, and the stress of beat one mirrors the natural stress of the words in each phrase. The conductor should prepare the accompanist and the choir for the ritardando at the end, by having the choir watch carefully, and showing the moving eighth notes in the gesture.

### **Stylistic Considerations**

Overall, the tune should be sung calmly, yet with strength and conviction. As the publisher writes in the performance notes, "don't be weak about it." Good breath support will help keep the tone vibrant, resonant, and healthy.



### **Musical Elements**

Since the tune is based on the pentatonic scale, one could rehearse the entire melody using solfege with younger choirs. It is a fantastic model of “moveable do,” since it changes keys in the final section. It could also very well serve as a beginning sight-reading exercise in a key that is not always used in choral music for young choirs, the key of E major. The final section modulates to F major. Singers should use legato and beautiful tone throughout. The simple rhythms and the flow (push and pull) of the phrases in both the melody and the piano accompaniment will drive this piece to a very moving performance.

### **Form and Structure**

The first verse is followed by a second verse with a more moving accompaniment part, which propel the ensemble through the music. Both of these verses remain in unison, same melody, and different words. The final verse uses the same words as the first, but in an imitative setting, with both parts ending each phrase together. The final “How Can I keep from Singing?” is repeated twice at the end.

## Verleih Uns Frieden

### Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Felix Mendelssohn (Bartholdy) was born in 1809 and died at age 38 in 1847, the same year his beloved sister passed away. Mendelssohn is known for his short and prodigious career of composition in the Romantic era<sup>103</sup>—his first composition was completed at age 11. He was born to a German Jewish banker, but later converted to Christianity. Mendelssohn was a talented musician and artist, also taking interest in drawing and painting. Mendelssohn composed in almost all genres, but was known especially for his English oratorio, *Elijah*, and other sacred choral/orchestral works. He loved to travel, serving as music director in many European cities such as Munich, Salzburg, Vienna, Rome, Düsseldorf, and finally settling in Leipzig, Germany as conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra.<sup>104</sup>

### Composition

Felix Mendelssohn composed *Verleih uns Frieden* in 1831 after receiving a Lutheran Hymnal from Franz Hauser, a Bach enthusiast.<sup>105</sup> It was during his travels around Europe, when he was in Rome from 1830-1831. *Verleih uns Frieden* is a sacred, hymn-like setting of a text originally by Martin Luther for SATB chorus and orchestra. The text is a German setting of *Da Pacem, Domine*.

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<sup>103</sup> Abrahams, 119.

<sup>104</sup> Shrock, 450.

<sup>105</sup> Matthew Mehaffey, *Teaching music through performance in choir, vol. 2*, (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2007), 170.

It is listed first in familiarity of Mendelssohn's smaller-scale sacred choral works and has a place in standard choral repertoire.<sup>106</sup>

### **Historical Perspective**

During his stay in Rome, he composed many sacred choral works, both in Latin and German. Mendelssohn's awareness of music's past is evident in the simple, diatonic, clearly organized melody and harmony, reminiscent of Bach's chorales.<sup>107</sup> *Verleih uns Frieden* is one of the most well-known of the smaller sacred works.

### **Technical Considerations**

In its full version, it is scored for two flutes, two clarinets, two bassoons, strings, and organ with SATB chorus. This edition has a piano reduction, which imitates the cello obligato in the instrumental parts. The conductor should take care to perfect the ensemble's German diction, especially on unstressed ending syllables such as "Frieden," "Zeiten," "streiten," and "alleine." To create the correct vowel, have singers wrap their lips around the vowel. Although there are plenty of dynamic markings in the score, much of the piece does not go beyond *piano* in dynamic, which will require great breath control. Choose a tempo that makes it possible for the ensemble to complete the lines in one breath.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Shrock, 455

<sup>107</sup> Mehaffey, 169.

<sup>108</sup> Mehaffey, 170.

approximately 4 measures long. The climax of the work occurs in the second phrase of the final melodic statement, *der für uns könnte streiten*, which means roughly, “you, who can fight for us.” All parts and all voices are marked forte at this section. Mendelssohn uses dynamics that paint the text in this way, the same way that a pianissimo dynamic is used for the word “alleine,” meaning “alone.” The word “Gott” is always placed at a higher pitch within the melody, approached by a leap, depicting it as sacred and heavenly.

### **Form and Structure**

The form of this piece is strophic. There are 3 verses, all with the same text. Each verse has 5 phrases, but in the last verse, the final phrase is extended with voice parts overlapping one another. In the first verse, the bass voice only has the melody. In the second verse, the bass sings a countermelody while the alto takes over the melody. In the final verse, all parts move homophonically, similar to a Bach chorale. The instrumental interludes in between each verse have a simple texture with the organ and bassoon providing a bass and a cello part that is divided into two.

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