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Graduate Recital: Blessed Are Those Who Mourn: A Journey of Grief and Hope

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Graduate Recital: Blessed Are Those Who Mourn: A Journey of Grief and Hope

Program Notes by Sara H. Jackson

Weep, O Mine Eyes (1599)

John Bennet was born and lived in northwest England from ~1575-1614. He wrote one anthem, four Psalm settings, six secular songs, and eighteen madrigals. His piece *Weep, O Mine Eyes* was published in a collection titled *Madrigalls to Foure Voyces of 1599* and is the most popularly performed Renaissance English madrigal in the modern era.¹ As it was uncommon to notate the biographical data of composers in Renaissance England, details of John Bennet's musical training is limited to none. English madrigals were modeled after similar works imported from Italy, the birthplace of the Renaissance madrigal. English madrigals were secular, tonal, rhythmic, utilized imitative polyphony, and presented significant word painting.² Under Queen Elizabeth's reign, Protestantism was established in England, Sir Frances Drake fought off the Spanish armada, peace was maintained within the country, Italian madrigals came to England (1588), and an environment for the arts began to flourish.³ John Bennet borrowed text from his own earlier works yet modeled musical features of his compositions after three additional English madrigalists; John Wilbye, John Weelkes, and especially Thomas Morley. Bennet's compositions demonstrated the latest trends in English madrigal writing and represented both a festive style in *All Creatures Now* and a more serious nature in *I Languish*.⁴

In the first two measures of *Weep, O Mine Eyes*, the voice parts enter individually singing the word "weep" in the order of bass, tenor, alto, and finally soprano in measure five. These

¹ Dennis Shrock, *Choral Repertoire* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 168-169.

² *Ibid*, 137.

³ *Ibid*, 135-185.

⁴ David Brown, "Bennet, John (i)," *Grove Music Online*, November 9, 2009, accessed 18 March 18, 2022, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781565192630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000040026>

staggered entrances depict mournful, quiet wailing. As the opening phrase continues, the volume builds and then diminishes as the singers plead that their weeping will “cease not.” In the second section of the song, the tenor and bass voice sing together in harmony and are trailed by the alto and soprano doing the same. John Bennet used a practice called “Directional Convention” where “the application of higher notes to words alluding to height or high places and lower notes to contrary meanings, became almost inescapable in mass, motet, madrigal, anthem, lute song, and opera.”⁵ This is notable toward the end of the piece when all voice parts sing the words “to swell so high” as the notes ascend in pitch and then during the words “that I may drown,” descend in pitch. This piece was written for four a cappella voices, with long lyrical melodic lines, expressive imitative polyphony, and ABB form.

Sicut Cervus (1604)

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina was likely born in the town named Palestrina, near Rome, Italy in 1525. His childhood through young adult musical training included singing as a young chorister at S Maria Maggiore, playing the organ for the S Agapito Cathedral, singing in an Italian musician training choir at Cappella Giulia, and finally singing in the papal chapel choir of Cappella Sistina. At age thirty, Palestrina officially became maestro di cappella and held that position in five locations in Italy until his death in 1594.⁶ During his life, Palestrina was strongly involved with the Council of Trent and the Counter-Reformation. He was a musical leader during the Italian Renaissance and even “thought to be the savior of Catholic church music.”⁷ These historical events liberated Roman music’s repertoire as word intelligibility became more important than intricate polyphony. “His success in reconciling the functional and aesthetic aims

⁵ Irving Godt, “An Essay on Word Painting,” *College Music Symposium*, 24, no. 2 (1984): 118–29, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40373748>.

⁶ Dennis Shrock, *Choral Repertoire* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 61-62.

⁷ *Ibid*, 62.

of Catholic church music in the post-Tridentine period earned him an enduring reputation as the ideal Catholic composer, as well as giving his style (or, more precisely, later generations' selective view of it) an iconic stature as a model of perfect achievement."⁸ Religiously, Palestrina's music was deeply influenced by the pope, the Catholic Reformation, and the sacred liturgical tradition of his church positions.⁹

Sicut Cervus, one of 529 motets written by Palestrina, uses overlapping imitative polyphony, balanced melodic contour and phrases, and dissonance that is both planned and resolved.¹⁰ The piece was originally composed in the key of F major for four a cappella voice parts. "Palestrina's classic motets convey an emphasis on the gradual unfolding of motivic segments that are broadly similar to one another and thus provide a strong sense of organic unity."¹¹ *Sicut Cervus* uses word painting and expressive lines in all voice parts noted throughout the motet's Latin text, "As the hart [deer] panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."¹² Imagery is particularly prominent in the soprano treatment of the word "aquarum" which moves up and down quickly in pitch representing the meaning of the word (water). The piece finishes with all voice parts moving toward a beautiful, slow-paced staggered ending to the word "Deus." In addition to motets, Palestrina composed masses, Magnificats, Litanies, Lamentation sets, and madrigals.

"The Trumpet Shall Sound" from *Messiah* (1741)

⁸ Lewis J Lockwood, Noel O'Regan, and Jessie Ann Owens, "Palestrina [Pretestino, Etc.], Giovanni Pierluigi Da," *Grove Music Online*, January 20, 2001, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Dennis Schrock, *Choral Repertoire*, 62-63.

¹¹ Lewis J Lockwood, "Palestrina..."

¹² Psalm 42:1 KJV

George Frideric Handel was born in Halle, Germany (1685) and died in England (1785). He was given private instrument lessons and music theory instruction as a child, was hired as an organist and harpsichordist as a teenager and traveled to Italy as a young adult to begin composing choral music for art patrons. He was appointed Kapellmeister to Germany's Elector of Hanover, then worked in London, England, becoming a British Citizen at twenty-eight. His career included positions at the Royal Academy of Music (music director), King's Theatre (co-director), and the Chapel Royal (composer). Disease and a failed surgery took Handel's eyesight, and he died at age seventy-one.¹³ Handel's extensive list of vocal and instrumental compositions included: stage operas and operatic arias; theatre music; odes; oratorios; Latin and English church music; Italian and German sacred music; dramatic and secular cantatas with added instruments; secular solos, duets, and trios, English hymns; Italian, French, German, and Spanish songs; orchestral, harp, organ, and harpsichord concertos; suites and overtures; sonatas; trios; music for solos and instrumental ensembles; and music for the keyboard.

From 1741-1742, after an extended focus on Italian opera composition, Handel gave six benefit concerts in Dublin, Ireland. Following this subscription series, Handel debuted his oratorio, *Messiah*, in two public charitable performances on April 13 and June 3, 1742. The libretto for *Messiah* was prepared (1739) by amateur musician and scholar Charles Jennens. Its text, carried from the Bible and Prayer Book Psalter, used Old and New Testament scripture to subtly relay the message of Jesus Christ as the Hebrew prophets' promised Messiah (nativity) and celebrate Christ's resurrection and redemption. Though *Messiah* was a religious work, it also had a universal message:

“[*Messiah*]...achieved its eventual status as the most famous of all oratorios by articulating its statement of faith with music absolutely direct in its appeal and in which

¹³ Dennis Schrock, *Choral Repertoire*, 326-327.

the sense of progress from hope through despair to triumph is meaningful even for those who do not share Christian belief.”¹⁴

Handel’s *Messiah* is a Baroque style oratorio written in three parts for chorus and orchestra consisting of choral and instrumental numbers, recitatives, and arias. “The Trumpet Shall Sound” is a bass aria written in *da capo* form (third section of the oratorio). In addition to a rhythmic, upbeat bass solo, the aria features the trumpet with the only instrumental solo in the entire oratorio. The text from this solo reflects on death and triumph over death through Christ as the Savior (I Corinthians 15).¹⁵ As the bass begins, his voice mimics a trumpet or bugle on four notes that accompany the words “the trumpet shall sound,” followed by “and the dead shall be raised” which is sung with an ascending melody. Handel notably uses the phrase “we shall be changed” many times and in a manner of word painting, has the soloist change pitch and change key as he sings the word “changed.”

“Wie Lieblich sind deine wohnungen” from the *A German Requiem* (1865-1868)

Johannes Brahms was born into poverty in Hamburg, Germany (1833). As a young child he took piano lessons, started composing melodies, and earned coins playing piano in waterfront taverns. By age fourteen he gave a piano recital, was composing, and taught piano lessons. While playing piano on tour with a Hungarian violinist, Brahms met Robert and Clara Schumann, who were among the first to recognize his genius musical skill. Brahms held positions in Germany as a music master and a women’s choir leader. He then moved to Austria, taught piano lessons, and

¹⁴ Anthony Hicks, "Handel [Händel, Hendel], George Frideric," *Grove Music Online*, accessed 4 May 4, 2022, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000040060>.

¹⁵ Noël Bisson, “LAB51 - Messiah: Baroque Music And The Main Musical Features Of Handel's Messiah,” Lab51 - messiah: Baroque music and the main musical features of Handel's Messiah (The President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2006), https://people.fas.harvard.edu/~lab51/messiah/musical_background.html.

conducted the Vienna Singakademie.¹⁶ Brahms was a romantic composer who wrote orchestral, choral, chamber, piano, and vocal music.

[He] preferred an art that was pure, objective, and above everything else, classical... If Brahms had the classicist's healthy respect for form and tradition, he did not neglect ardor and poetic expression. To a remarkable degree Brahms combined freedom of emotion and flexibility of thought with the discipline of structure.¹⁷

Brahms' first significant success was his composition *A German Requiem*. He began composing the piece the same year that Schumann died and even honored a notation found in Schumann's diary for the title. Brahms used the title *A German Requiem*, not to honor German nationalism, but because he chose German text from the Lutheran Bible rather than using liturgical Latin. The words of the piece offer peace, comfort, and hope rather than despair. The final work has seven movements in its complete form, although performances were presented as movements were added. Brahms himself conducted a performance at the Bremen Cathedral with a large-scale orchestra and two hundred voices.¹⁸

The fourth movement with formal structure ABACA is called "Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen" which translates "How lovely are thy dwellings." Part A opens with a short introduction and full chorus quietly singing the main melodic theme. The peaceful text intermingles with rich harmony within the first eight measures as the singers serenely long for Heaven. The next phrase immediately moves to a minor, melancholy key while each voice part enters singing "verlanget und sehne" (For my soul it longeth, yea fainteth). *Crescendo* continues to a *forte* moment with the sopranos singing "sehnet sich" on a high Ab and mirroring a faint with their pitches falling Ab-F-Db. Part B grows and yearns with text saying "mein Leib und Seele freuen sich" (my soul and body cryeth out for the living God). Part A returns the listener to

¹⁶ Milton Cross and David Ewen, "Johannes Brahms," in *Milton Cross' Encyclopedia of the Great Composers and Their Music* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1962), pp. 117-121.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 124.

¹⁸ Dennis Schrock, *Choral Repertoire*, 476.

the peaceful “Wie lieblich” but adds “Wohl denen” (Blest are they). These two added words are quiet but pronounced showing how important and true it is that people who cry out to God and dwell with Him are blessed. The next repeated phrase “wohl denen, die in deinem Hause wohnen” holds a masterful alto harmony line on the words “die in” (they that) as their voices are the only ones moving within those two measures from a treble G up a fourth to C then down one whole step to Bb. This momentary dissonance is powerful. Part C is strong and loud. Each voice part enters separately and sings polyphonically for this section “die loben dich immerdar” (praise Thy name evermore). The tenors sing up to a treble Ab and the basses reach a treble Eb. After soaring loud and high voices this section ends with such a dramatic *diminuendo* that there is a feeling of rest. However, quiet eighth notes on pizzicato strings in the orchestra section move the song forward into the return once more to Part A. A ten-measure phrase ascends in pitch and dynamics from *piano* to *forte* and back to *piano* to end the song.

Great Is Thy Faithfulness (1923)

Poet Thomas Obadiah Chisholm was born in Franklin, Kentucky in 1866. He attended a one room schoolhouse, taught in the same school, and then became associate editor of his local newspaper. After taking a profession of faith in his mid-twenties, Chisholm served as an ordained Methodist pastor until poor health forced his resignation. Many of Chisholm’s 1200 poems were published in religious magazines and several were used as hymn texts.¹⁹ Musician William Marion Runyan was born in Marion, New York in 1870. He started playing the organ in church at age twelve, pastored several church plants, served the Methodist conference, edited *Christian Workers Magazine*, worked at Moody Bible Institute, and was an editor for the Hope Publishing Company. Runyan wrote gospel songs, hymn texts, and hymn tunes.²⁰

¹⁹ Kenneth W. Osbeck, “Great Is Thy Faithfulness,” in *101 Hymn Stories* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1982), pp. 83-85.

²⁰ Harry Plantina, 2007, “Great Is Thy Faithfulness,” *Hymnary.Org*,

The text for *Great Is Thy Faithfulness* was based on scripture from Lamentations where the prophet Jeremiah, although grieved by the faithlessness of the people to whom he was sent to minister, was comforted by the hope and compassion of God. Jeremiah said “Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”²¹ The three verses for *Great Is Thy Faithfulness* were penned by Chisholm who said,

My income has not been large at any time due to impaired health in the earlier years which has followed me on until now. Although I must not fail to record here the unfailing faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God and that He has given me many wonderful displays of His providing care, for which I am filled with astonishing gratefulness.²²

Chisholm sent many of his poems to Rev. William Runyan at the Moody Bible Institute in 1923.

When Runyan received *Great Is Thy Faithfulness* he expressed, “This particular poem held such an appeal that I prayed most earnestly that my tune might carry over its message in a worthy way, and the subsequent history of its use indicates that God answered prayer.”²³ His composed tune was titled *Faithfulness* and had a chorus plus a meter of 11. 10. 11. 11. for each of the three verses. *Great Is Thy Faithfulness* was first printed in a pamphlet of private songs and later published in over one hundred different hymnals.²⁴ Runyan used major chords which show strength and hope. The title phrase “Great is Thy faithfulness” is sung once and then repeated one step higher. Repeated phrases emphasize importance. A *fermata* over the last faithfulness in the chorus is striking and memorable, truly showing that God’s faithfulness is everlasting.

Over the Rainbow (1939)

https://hymnary.org/text/great_is_thy_faithfulness_o_god_my_fathe.

²¹ Lamentations 3:22

²² Harry Plantina, “Great Is Thy Faithfulness.

²³ Kenneth W. Osbeck, “Great Is Thy Faithfulness,” in *101 Hymn Stories*, p.85.

²⁴ *Ibid*.

Lyricist Edgar Yipsel (Yip) Harburg was born to Russian immigrant parents in Manhattan, New York in 1896. He graduated from City College and became a full-time writer. Harburg wrote fantasies, lyrics for musical comedies, and the libretto for *Finian's Rainbow* (1947) and *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). Harburg non-musical works were presented a political agenda and included the subjects of women's rights, war, racial prejudice, and government corruption. His lyrics and libretto were full of satire, "sly wit, clever wordplay and short, terse phrasing."²⁵ Song writer Harold Arlen was born in Buffalo, New York in 1905. He grew up singing in his father's synagogue choir, played piano for movie theaters, had his own band "Snappy Trio," and was a radio singer and pianist. Arlen wrote the songs *Get Happy* and *It's Only a Paper Moon*. His music post World War I reflected America's mood due to World War II and the Great Depression. The music he wrote for films focused on characters and narrative. He is best known for his work on *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) which was "among the earliest film musicals to attempt to integrate the use of song into the development of character and plot."²⁶ Arranger Mac Huff was born in the state of Indiana in the 1950s. He took piano lessons at age five and arranged music for his show choir in high school. He attended the University of Wisconsin (BM Piano Performance) and the University of Texas (MM Piano Performance). He is a publisher with Jenson Publications and Hal Leonard and wrote arrangements of Broadway Collections, Medleys and Reviews; Pop Standards; and a cappella pieces for multiple ages. He also wrote twenty-two original songs including *Big City Swing* and *We Are a Family*.²⁷

²⁵ Thomas S. Hischak, "Harburg, E(dgar) Y(ipsel)," *Grove Music Online*, 2001, Accessed 19 Mar. 2022, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000047952>.

²⁶ Larry Stempel, "Arlen, Harold," *Grove Music Online*, 2001, Accessed 19 Mar. 2022, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000001256>.

²⁷ Mac Huff, "About Mac," Mac Huff (Build A Better Web Site, 2020), <https://machuff.com/about-2/>.

The song “Over the Rainbow,” from the film *The Wizard of Oz*, is a solo sung by Dorothy who is dreaming of the wonderful unknown that is free from trouble and far away from her hometown of Kansas. Mac Huff arranged this famous ballad into a piece (2014) for three and four voice parts accompanied by piano. About arranging, Mac Huff says, “When I write an arrangement, I start from the lyric because all song writing is story telling as I’m concerned. So, my goal as an arranger is to unearth that story somehow. So, when you perform it, the story is evident.”²⁸ The song begins with all voices singing eighth note “doo-doo-doo” as a quiet accompaniment to a soloist singing the verse. The piano adds ornamented sections such as running patterns of ascending thirty-second notes and rolled chords. A wide range of dynamics and *ritardandos* add expression to the piece. The chorus (title of the song) begins slow and reverent, a cappella, and with rich harmony. Then it moves more quickly with a flowing, gorgeous alto harmony line on the line “Somewhere over the rainbow skies are blue.” Treble and bass voices take turns through the section “Someday I’ll wish upon a star...” until all parts sing in harmony once again supporting a soloist. Toward the end of the song there is an abrupt, powerful key change for all the voices at the singing of the final chorus. “Over the Rainbow” ends just as tenderly as it began with the beautiful vocal eighth note accompaniment.

Flying Free (1979)

Don Besig was born in 1936. He studied at Ithaca College and was a music educator for thirty-one years in western New York. Besig started composing to fulfill the need of music for student choirs of various levels and volunteer choirs. He began collaborating with a former

²⁸ *The Inside Voice: An Interview with Mac Huff* (J.W. Pepper & Son, Inc., 2022), 4:44.
<https://youtu.be/p1lgmE1d7jk>.

student, Nancy Price. Together, Besig and Price have produced over four hundred anthems. Besig currently directs the adult choir at the Perinton Presbyterian Church (Fairmont, NY). He is a nationally sought-after adjudicator and clinician, directing festivals and conducting workshops in forty-two states.²⁹

Flying Free is lyrical song written for four-part choir and available for a three-part choir or a developing two-part choir. A high and flowing obligato flute part matches the song's theme of flying. Each verse begins with a beautiful ascending melody that descends and changes key. Particularly poignant is the text in the second verse, "and I can never hope that I can travel on without pain." On the word 'pain' there is a chord change and crescendo that leads into a gentle realization that "time goes swiftly on its way." When the next phrase is sung with an identical melody, the words "all too soon we've lost today" become highlighted in the ear of the listener. Hearing something repetitive stands out in importance. Repetition represents meaning. During the final verse, extended imitation of phrases tells the delightful message of singing and sharing life's song. Life is a gift of love that brings joy, helps the spirit to soar, and sets the heart flying free.

Inscription of Hope (1994)

American born conductor and composer Randall J. Stroope received advanced musical training from the University of Colorado (MM Voice Performance) and Arizona State University (DMA Choral Conducting). He studied composition with two teachers Cecil Effinger and Normand Lockwood, both of whom were students of Nadia Boulanger (a student of Gabriel Fauré). Stroope has conducted and performed both in the United States and internationally. He taught at Universities in Oklahoma, New Jersey, and Nebraska. He is currently an artistic

²⁹ "Don Besig," [Hope Publishing Company, 2022], <https://www.hopepublishing.com/1218/>.

director for two European choral festivals and composes full time from studios in Florida and New Mexico. His compositions include commissions; choral works for mixed, treble, and tenor/bass choirs; anthems for solo or duet; opera; chorus plus instrument; and instrumental works.³⁰

Stroope composed *Inscription of Hope* (1994) for mixed voices with optional oboe and string quartet. The lyrics of the piece came from German text inscribed on a cellar wall in Cologne, Germany during World War II by Jews hiding from Nazis. Those words “I believe in the sun, even when it is not shining, and I believe in love, even when there’s no one there (verse one). And I believe in God even when He is silent; I believe through any trial, there is always a way (verse two)” offered a message of hope amidst the horror of the Holocaust. The message of hope within the song is still powerful and necessary today. *Inscription of Hope* begins with a duet of tender “Ooos” sung by the soprano and alto sections. The tenors and basses enter singing the first verse which is based on a Russian folk tune. The music that accompanies the words “But a voice rises within me” does indeed rise in pitch for all voice parts. In unique form, the first verse is repeated before an a cappella, *forte* section for verse two in which the words “But I believe in God even when he is silent” truly sound like a statement of bold belief. The song ends in a slow, reflective manor with a hopeful blessing and all voice parts singing in unison wishing for sunshine, happiness, love, and peace.

Keep Your Lamps (2003)

American conductor, arranger, and composer André Thomas was born in Wichita, Kansas in 1952. His musical training included music degrees from Friends State University (BM Music Education 1973), Northwestern University (MM Piano Performance 1976), and the

³⁰ “Z. R. Stroope,” Z R Stroope, 2022, <https://www.zrstroope.com/about/>.

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (DM Choral Conducting 1983). Thomas had specific instruction in conducting and has conducted widely throughout North America and internationally Europe, Asia, Australia, and New Zealand.³¹ In addition to choral composition, arranging, and conducting, Thomas is a published author of the book *Way Over in Beulah Lan': Understanding and Performing the Negro Spiritual* (2007).³² Thomas served as Professor of Music Education and Director of Choral Studies at Florida State University from 1984 until retirement in 2020. Thomas still adjudicates and conducts today.

Thomas is particularly well known for his work arranging spirituals of the African American tradition and was mentored by William Dawson and Jester Hairston. *Keep Your Lamps* is a religious folk song whose message comes from the biblical story of the ten virgins. In this parable, Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who take their lamps to meet the bridegroom. Five are wisely prepared with lamp oil and five are foolish with no lamp oil. The wise virgins who were prepared were allowed entry to the wedding banquet and the foolish were not.³³ “Keep your lamps trimmed and burning – the time is drawing nigh” also has a subversive message, common in many spirituals, of being prepared to escape from slavery either to freedom in the North or freedom through death.³⁴

...in “Keep Your Lamps Trimmed,” the theology of salvation carries an intra-metaphoric emphasis, referring to the cultivation and maintenance of the soul. But the assertive force of the literalness of “lamps” cannot be ignored when juxtaposed with the anticipatory phrase “work’s almost done” and with the anticipatory and coaxing phrase “don’t grow weary.”³⁵

³¹ “Andre J. Thomas,” André J Thomas (The Lorenz Corporation, 2022), <https://lorenz.com/composers-and-authors/meet-our-composers/andre-j-thomas>.

³² Steven N. Kelly, “Thomas, André,” *Grove Music Online*, May 26, 2010, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

³³ Matthew 25:1-13

³⁴ “May 4, 2012 ~ African-American Spirituals,” PBS (Public Broadcasting Service, May 10, 2013), <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2012/05/04/may-4-2012-african-american-spirituals/10896/>.

³⁵ Erskine Peters, “The Poetics of the Afro-American Spiritual,” *Black American Literature Form* 23, no. 3, (1989),

Verse one of Thomas' four-part arrangement keeps a steady rhythmic pulse, accompanied by conga drums, that represents the native rhythm and culture of African tradition. In verse two, the melody voice sings "Children don't grow weary till your work is done" while all other voice parts sing "weary" in almost moaning half notes. Verse three's *forte* and accented "Christian, journey soon be over, the time is drawing nigh" implores the singer and the listener to be ready. The song finishes by repeating the first verse two times, first quietly and then with *forte* finality. The ending "nigh" has a great impact *fp* for all voices that *crescendos* and then *diminuendos* to *pianissimo* in the span of two measures. This piece is courageous and powerful with dramatic dynamic changes, repeated phrases, and the perpetual undercurrent of a heartbeat rhythm.

***O Love* (2016)**

Composer, conductor, pianist, and teacher Elaine Hagenberg was born in 1979. She received a degree from Drake University in Iowa (BA Music Education 2002). Through teaching she developed a love of writing and composing. She has written over fifty commissioned pieces which include choral anthems for three- and four-part choirs. She reflects on using the text from other people's poetry for her compositions:

I like to determine kind of the rhythm and the meter of the words. And from there, often times a melody will come to me... and a line and a shape to a phrase and from there I then try to piece together kind of the form of the composition and try to create harmonies that will also describe what's occurring.³⁶

The text for *O Love* came from the words of a hymn written by Scottish minister, George Matheson. Matheson wrote the words in response to the pain he felt when his sister got married (which reminded him of his own broken engagement years before and broken heart). Hagenberg

<https://doi.org/10.2307/2904207>, p.573.

³⁶ Iowa Public Radio | By Barney Sherman, "How Iowa's Elaine Hagenberg Became a Noted Choral Composer. (Interview and Music!)," Iowa Public Radio, July 10, 2020, <https://www.iowapublicradio.org/ipr-music/2018-11-26/how-iowas-elaine-hagenberg-became-a-noted-choral-composer-interview-and-music>. 3:35.

took those hymn words, changed the melody, expanded the harmony, repeated phrases, added voice parts, offered optional cello, and created a beautiful piano accompaniment.³⁷ Each moment of the piece is thoughtful. Hagenberg's ability to paint pictures with words is painfully beautiful. A particularly amazing moment occurs during the phrase "I trace the rainbow through the rain, and feel the promise is not vain." The whole phrase mimics a rainbow with an arc of ascending and descending pitches as well as dynamics that grow and diminish. Another moment comes with the phrase "I rest my weary soul in thee." An immediate *subito piano*, plus *ritardando*, and *fermata* over the last word allows the singers to rest and reminds the listeners to rest. The words and music of the phrase is restful. After numerous confident "O Love" phrases, the song ends with a gentle reminder that love will not let go.

Those Who Mourn (2021)

Joel Jackson, lyric/melody writer, was born in Niskayuna, New York in 1976. As a young adult he attended Eastern College (BA Youth Ministry 1998) and Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary (M.Div. 2002). Joel holds the following published work: Interline YLO and MVL Curriculum Devotionals (2010-2021), Christian Endeavor's Prayer Week Devotional Meditations (2021), and an article titled "Subversive Peace for this Christmas Season" in www.redletterchristians.org (December 24, 2021). Sara (Shearer) Jackson, song arranger, was born in Hershey, Pennsylvania in 1978. She attended Eastern College (BA Music Education 2000) and Messiah University (MM Choral Conducting 2022). Sara's musical training from childhood through young adult included taking and teaching private flute, piano, and voice lessons. She also sang in and directed numerous choirs. Joel and Sara met in college, married, and have lived in Pennsylvania since 2000. They began combining their love of poetry and music in the following collaborative non-published works: *I Long to Know Jesus* (1999 hymn

³⁷ "Elaine Hagenberg Music," Elaine Hagenberg, 2020, <https://www.elainehagenberg.com/about>.

arrangement), *Perfectly Peter* (2004 lullaby), *Precious Love* (2009), *Even Now* (2016 50th anniversary), *Trust and Abide* (2017), *Balance the Scales* (2018), *Leaning Tree, King of Glory, Flannel in the Outhouse, You've Been a Blessing* (2020), and *Those Who Mourn*, a four voice a cappella arrangement (2021).

Joel wrote the poetry for *Those Who Mourn* during a time in his life where he experienced incredible loss. A span of two years encompassed for him both the painful resignation from a fourteen-year church ministry job and the death of the Jackson's sixteen-year-old son. This grief was compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. The poetry for the piece was based on a Biblical statement from Matthew 5:4 and imagery obtained from the Sermon on the Mount.³⁸ In the poem, the verses are quatrains, the phrases have an ABCB rhyme scheme, and the carefully chosen words are rich with alliteration. When asked how the melody was composed, Joel responded, "It fit the rhythm in my head." Sara took Joel's poem and melody and created an arrangement of the piece for four voice parts. Word painting was particularly chosen for a part of verse three which says, "The heart beats broken." There is a fermata on each voice part singing the word broken which represents the extended pause that brokenness brings. At the end of the fourth verse comes a *fortissimo* section sung in unison. The melody, volume, and emphasized notes and words are full of hope stating the main thought of the piece, "Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted – they shall be comforted in the Kingdom of God."

All Things New (2021)

[Elaine Hagenberg's biography is listed above with the song *O Love*.]

³⁸ Matthew 5-7

Elaine Hagenberg wrote *All Things New* as a commissioned choir piece for a United Methodist Church in South Carolina. The text came, in part, from words by English poet Frances Ridley Havergal (1836-1879). Havergal started writing as a young girl, attained vast knowledge of Hebrew, Greek, and other modern languages, became a Christian at the age of fifteen, fully dedicated her life and work to Christ, and wrote more hymns than any other lady in nineteenth century England.³⁹ The other inspiration for the lyrics came from an adaptation of scripture in the book of Revelation, “Behold, I make all things new... I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning, and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.”⁴⁰ When asked about her process for composing, Hagenberg says:

...what’s compelling to me about writing choral music is you find a very meaningful text and you get an opportunity to combine that with the beauty of the human voice and we get to tell a story and we get to step away from the ugliness of the world and we get to create beauty and we get to offer hope and we get to offer comfort.⁴¹

All Things New contains a beautiful piano introduction. The piano could continue and be played as a solo for the whole song because the melody is incorporated directly into the piano accompaniment. Hagenberg says “...often times my piano parts are not simply accompaniments, but they’re very complimentary and they’re very collaborative.”⁴² Hagenberg’s ability to match text, melody, harmony, and accompaniment is so obvious and gorgeous. The song begins with unison treble voices singing “Light after darkness.” The key sounds light and yet the voices move lower in pitch for darkness. This happens right away again with the phrase “gain after loss.” As the tenors and basses enter and sing “strength after weakness, crown after cross,” their voices are strong on the word “weak” (this is the first moment of harmony in the piece) and their pitch rises on the word cross. The key moves to minor in a few places as all voices sing “home

³⁹ Charles S. Nutter and Wilbur F. Tillet, “Frances Ridley Havergal,” ed. Stephen Ross, Frances Ridley Havergal biography - Christian Biographies, 2022, <https://www.wholesomewords.org/biography/bhavergal16.html>.

⁴⁰ Revelation 21:5-6

⁴¹ Iowa Public Radio, Elaine Hagenberg, 5:29.

⁴² Iowa Public Radio, Elaine Hagenberg, 3:35.

after wandering” and “love after loneliness” matching the dreariness of wandering and loneliness. There is a *poco ritardando* directly on the phrase “life after tomb” which shows how death slows life’s pace for those who remain alive without the one who has died. Each time the phrase “Springs of living water shall wash away each tear” occurs, the voices sing out in unison and raise in *crescendo* and dynamics. Then they sing “He is making all things new” with twisting dissonance and resolution and a repeat of the same phrase which comes as a resolute, peaceful statement reminding the listener that the words are true. The song ends as it began, with a gentle piano moment.

Hope Waits (2021)

Karen Marrolli was born in 1975. She earned degrees from Westminster Choir College (BM Music Theory/Composition and MM Choral Conducting and Sacred Music) and Louisiana State University (DMA Choral Conducting). She currently lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico and serves as the Director of Music Ministries at Central United Methodist Church. She is a classically trained conductor and composer. As a singer, songwriter, and performer, she is influenced by musicians Tori Amos and Regina Spektor and genres Americana and acoustic Irish Traditional folk music. Marrolli is passionate about wrestling with real world events through choral music. In addition to *Hope Waits (2021)*, Marrolli has published three albums and written numerous anthems primarily sacred in nature.⁴³

Hope Waits was written during the COVID-19 pandemic. During a fearful time, this song expresses hope and resilience. Marrolli shares, “Throughout life, even as we encounter sadness and pain, hope stands waiting for us to choose it. Hope has the ability to comfort us in grief, to still the tumult of our souls, and to be a light on darkened paths if we can commit to it anew each

⁴³ “Karen Marrolli – Bio,” Karen Marrolli, ECS Publishing, 2022, <https://www.karenmarrollimusic.com/bio>.

day.”⁴⁴ The poetry of the song has three verses, each of which end with the phrase “Hope waits for you.” Every verse of this five-voice part piece is lyrical and expressive, includes an “Ooo, Ahh, or Mmm,” and is dynamically diverse. The chorus is spirited and has the gospel feeling of an African American Spiritual. The form of *Hope Waits* is verse one, verse two, chorus, verse three, chorus, expanded chorus with a soprano gospel descant, repeated verse three. Within each verse, there is beautiful word painting as the phrases “Hope stands” (verse one), “Hope lives” (verse two), and “Hope grows” (verse three) ascend in pitch. The piece begins in a hushed *piano* and ends *pianissimo*, signifying that even if hope is just a whisper, it is still there.

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⁴⁴ Karen Marroli, *Hope Waits*, (Galaxy Music Corporation, Inc., 2021), p.2.

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