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MESSIAH COLLEGE

ADVANCED CONDUCTING PROJECT

**SUBMITTED IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MUSIC IN CHORAL CONDUCTING**

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

BY

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Part One

The Renaissance Era

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Ave Maria

Josquin des Prez (ca. 1440-1521)

SATB *a cappella* (4:50)

Choral Public Domain

Composer

Josquin des Prez was born in Picardy, France in 1440. He is known as one of the most prolific composers of the Renaissance Era. Josquin is also known for pioneering the compositional technique of pervasive imitation. There is very little known about the earlier part of Josquin's life. The earliest known information was found in a notice from 1459 that listed Josquin as a singer for the Milan Cathedral. In 1477, Josquin worked for King René of Anjou and in 1478 he was sent to the king's duchy of Bar.¹

Josquin was a world traveler and worked in numerous places throughout his life. From 1501-1503 he worked for King Louis XII and in 1503 was *maestro di cappella* at the Court of Ferrara. Josquin started working as a cleric at Norte Dame Cathedral in Condé-sur-Escaut, Hainaut, France in 1508 and remained in this position for the remainder of his life. He died in Condé on August 27, 1521.

Josquin's output of music is quite extensive. His compositions contain approximately twenty masses, seventy-five secular works, and more than hundreds of motets. His secular works were mostly French *chansons*, and a few pieces in Italian and instrumental pieces.

Composition and Genre

Ave Maria is a sacred motet for SATB voicing. It is to be performed *a cappella* and, historically speaking, should be performed in church, by church musicians. Today this piece is performed all over the world in churches and concert halls.

¹ Dennis Shrock, *Choral Repertoire*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, 28-29.

Historical Perspective

Josquin's *Ave Maria* is considered to be a "classic" among choral music. This piece was composed (most likely) in northern Italy in about 1485 and was used as a devotional piece for the Virgin Mary. The church musicians used most motets of this nature. They would be found singing such pieces in front of a statue/icon of the Virgin Mary before the end of their day. The text tells the story of the Virgin Mary's life events: her conception, nativity, annunciation, purification, and assumption. All of these events are celebrated yearly by the Marian feast days of the Catholic Church.

Technical Considerations

Josquin uses his pioneered technique of *pervasive imitation*. With the use of *pervasive imitation*, the melody does not stay confined to one voice or the other. Instead, the melody travels through all voices. With this use of imitation, careful consideration of dynamics should be taken at each entrance so parts do not out-sing each other. Once each voice part enters, they should lower their dynamics for the following entrance to be heard. This will allow the continuation of sound to be pleasant and seamless. The conductor should have each entrance marked well or memorized to assist the singers.

Stylistic Considerations

The text plays such an important role in this motet. It consists of a "welcome" to the Virgin and is followed by five stanzas. Each of the stanzas pays tribute to the five events in her life: conception, nativity, annunciation, purification and assumption. The motet could even be considered as a "résumé" of the Virgin's life. The end of the motet is depicting Mary pleading for mercy during the moment of judgment.

Musical Elements

This piece is composed for an SATB *a cappella* choir. This piece, like other unaccompanied motets, was to be sung by church musicians. The beginning of this motet starts in an imitative fashion starting with the sopranos followed by the altos, tenors, and basses. During this triple meter (m. 94), it is important for the micro beat to remain constant with the beginning of the piece. Dynamics are not written into this piece, but applied through interpretation of singers and the conductor.

Form and Structure

Josquin begins the piece with the sopranos singing text in honor of the Virgin Mary, *Ave Maria, gratia plena*. This text is then ornamented within the phrase and, imitatively, distributes to all four of the voices: soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. In measure sixteen, Josquin began using “duets” with the soprano and alto voices and the tenor and bass voices. This pairing technique was used frequently by Josquin. The duets continue until measure ninety-four when Josquin goes, briefly, from a polyphonic (duple meter) texture to a homophonic (and homorhythmic) texture with a triple meter. In measure one hundred and nine, Josquin returns to using a polyphonic texture, duple meter and duets between the two upper voices and two lower voices.

Text

Hail Mary, full of grace, The Lord is with thee, serene Virgin.

Hail, thou whose Conception, Full of great joy, Fills heaven and earth With new gladness.

Hail, thou whose Nativity Became our great celebration,

Like Lucifer, the morning star, Going before the true sun.

Hail, faithful humility, Fruitful without man, Whose Annunciation Was our salvation.

Hail, true virginity, Immaculate chastity, Whose Purification Was our cleansing.

Hail, glorious one In all angelic virtues, Whose Assumption Was our glorification.

O Mother of God, Remember me. Amen.²

² *Ave Maria: Josquin des Prez*. Accessed 2 November 2013.

O Vos Omnes

No. 14 of *Tenebrae Responsories*

Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548-1611)

SATB Chorus (5:15)

Hal Leonard Corporation

Composer

Tomás Luis de Victoria was born in Avila, in central Spain. As a young boy he attended the Jesuit School of S Gill along with being a boy chorister at Avila Cathedral. As an early teenager in 1573, he served as a singer, teacher, and *maestro di cappella* at the Jesuit Collegio Germanico in Rome.³ He is said to have been one of the greatest Spanish composers of the late Renaissance era. He was considered to be a very quiet man who preferred staying out of the public eye but was still well known by several composers of the time. He only composed sacred music and used Latin texts. He is known for using pervasive imitation and brief segments of homophony in his music, which was a common characteristic of Rome and most of Spain during the later sixteenth century.⁴

Historians say that Victoria studied under Palestrina during his years at the Roman Seminary. After Palestrina's passing, Victoria took over his role as the choirmaster at the Roman Seminary along with holding the same job title at Jesuit Order's German College. Not only was Victoria a composer, he also took time to be a priest for a short period before returning to Spain in 1585. After returning to Spain, he accepted the position of chaplain to King Philip II of Spain's sister, the Dowager Empress María, and her daughter while playing the organ and being a choirmaster before his death in 1611.

³ Dennis Shrock, *Choral Repertoire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 94.

⁴ *Ibid.*

Composition and Genre

O Vos Omnes is a sacred motet and is performed *a capella*. A motet is a polyphonic choral work typically set to a sacred Latin text. *O Vos Omnes* is the fourteenth part of the “Tenebrea Responsories”. The “Tenebrea Responsories” is a Christian service that is celebrated within Western Christianity the night before Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. The service uses a mixture of songs and reading. Victoria’s *O Vos Omnes* is one piece that has been used many times for this religious tradition. The biblical text of the piece is written in Latin. Latin was considered to be the vernacular language of the church during the Renaissance era.

Historical Perspective

O Vos Omnes was written by Tomás Luis de Victoria in 1572 for four singing voices. This beautiful motet was used as a responsorial during the Roman Catholic liturgies for Holy Week as a part of the “Tenebrea Responsories”. During the time Victoria was composing this piece the Council of Trent was established and made it noted that any music implying “lascivious (sexual) or impure” natures was to be prohibited. Due to these events, several composers with secular works had to dismiss their works unpublished. Luckily, Victoria was using a biblical text taken from Lamentations 1:12 for *O Vos Omnes*. “All who pass by the speaker on the road to judge whether any sorrow compares with his; in its Holy Week context the speaker is assumed to be Christ hanging on the cross, questioning whether even His Father has forsaken Him”.⁵

⁵ All Music Guide, “The Ultimate Classical Music Destination: Tomás Luis de Victoria,” Classical Archives, Working Paper, 2008, <http://www.classicalarchives.com/work/82915.html#tvf=tracks&tv=about> (accessed March 5, 2014).

Technical Considerations

This piece is accessibly written for high school choirs. The tessitura is written in a comfortable range for all voice parts, although there are some challenging parts that call for special attention. The unbalanced vocal parts will require singers to feel very secure with their parts so that the dissonance can be appropriately performed. Added accidentals could create a problem and should be given plenty of attention. Isolating them for each voice part can help with overall tuning. The Latin text requires pure vowels and soft consonants. Practicing by rhythmically speaking the text will help solidify the ensemble's pronunciation. Additionally, the lack of instrumental accompaniment can present a challenge for some ensembles with their tempo. The conductor plays a vital key in forward motion and a constant pulse. During rehearsals the conductor should also encourage the singers to sway while singing, which will help them to internalize the pulse.

Stylistic Considerations

When Tomás Luis de Victoria composed *O Vos Omnes*, he used very ^{few} little expressive markings. Without the use of these marks, performers should flow through each phrase following the cues from the conductor and the natural *crescendos* and *decrescendos*. Other composers have arranged this piece and have added a varying amount of expression markings. Conductors should listen to several recordings of the piece, so that they can determine the best performance methods for their ensemble. Also, if possible, perform this piece in a mixed formation. The mixed formation will allow every singer to hear every voice part. In the end, this will give a more balanced sound across the ensemble.

Musical Elements

The piece is unbalanced, at times, with single voices anticipating each entry or chord change. The melodies contain half-steps causing tension throughout. Victoria uses a tetrachord in the piece to truly signify sadness or lament. Along with harmonic tensions to evoke sadness and lament, Victoria also uses word painting. During the Renaissance era composers would often use word painting to convey a poetic image to the listeners. In m. 20 the sopranos have the word “dolor” meaning sorrow. Victoria uses a whole note (A-flat) tied to a half note to stretch out the word and imply true “sorrow”. The A-flat changes the chord to a minor chord, also painting the picture of sadness. A hemiola is used later in the piece, again with the text of “dolor”, dragging it on, as if the singers are vocally displaying the physical feeling of the text.

Form and Structure

The form of *O Vos Omnes* is ABCB. Victoria uses polyphonic textures throughout this piece. The A (mm. 1-16) section introduces the piece of music with tiered vocal entrances in the tenor and alto lines with the sopranos and basses entering simultaneously. Both B (mm. 17-33 and mm. 52-68) sections contain the same text and music. Section C (mm. 34-51) is the only section of the piece that leads off with the sopranos. In mm. 45-51 a hemiola (the ratio of 3:2) is created with the soprano line against the other three voice parts.⁶

⁶ Thomas Luis de Victoria, Chester L. Alwes and Robert Shaw, *O Vos Omnes*. Hal Leonard Corporation, 1989.

Text

O Vos Omnes has a biblical text that was taken from Lamentations 1:12. The overall idea/theme of the text of this piece is pain and anguish. The city of Jerusalem fell because of the sinful nature of its people. God was punishing them for their sinful nature because He loved them.

O vos ómnes,
O you all,

qui transitis per viam:
who pass a long way,
attendite et vidéte
attend and see

si est dolor
if there is sorrow,
sicut dolor meus.
Like sorrow my.⁷

⁷ Ron Jeffers, *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire, Volume 1: Sacred Latin Texts*, Corvallis, Oregon: Earthsongs, 1988, 182.

Part Two

The Baroque Era

“Glory to God” from *Messiah*, George Frideric Handel

Messiah

No. 17 *Glory to God*

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

SATB Chorus and orchestra

Novello Handel Edition

Composer

George F. Handel was born on February 23, 1685 in Halle, Germany. Handel was not encouraged to pursue music. Instead, his father wanted him to become a lawyer. When Handel was a young boy, he was not even allowed to have a musical instrument but that did not discourage him in the slightest, and certainly did not keep him from practicing in secret.⁸ Even though he was being forced to pursue a life in law, he did not give up the hopes of one day following his passion of music.⁹

After playing for a Duke at the age of seven, Handel was given the opportunity to work with some of the best musicians in Germany. He was able to work with composers/ musicians such as: Friedrich Wilhelm Zacchow, Georg Philipp Telemann and Agostino Steffani. Not long after, Handel decided to try his hand in the world of Opera. Craving more elaborate operas, he moved to Italy in 1706 and performed in operas such as: *Rodrigo* (1707) and *Agrippina* (1709).¹⁰ After his ventures to Italy, Handel made a move to London, England where he would write his very first opera called *Rinaldo*. Handel did not only write for the operatic world, he also wrote for harpsichord, chamber ensembles, and orchestra. He spent a great deal of time in England, later

⁸ Notablebiographies.com, "George Frederic Handel Biography," Encyclopedia of World Biographies, Accessed February 25, 2014, <http://www.notablebiographies.com/Gi-He/Handel-GeorgeFrideric.html>.

⁹ Dennis Shrock, *Choral Repertoire*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, 326.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 327.

becoming a citizen. After he became a citizen he was named composer of music to the Chapel Royal.¹¹

In April of 1737, Handel suffered a stroke but was able to recover and continued to write. Not long after that, he gave up on opera and started writing oratorios. Luckily for him, the audiences of the English people seemed to like the sound of the oratorio better than opera. Handel, being a clever man, took some of his older operas and rewrote them in an oratorio fashion. The people loved them, much to his surprise! By 1751 Handel was completely blind. As his health continued to fail, he became limited in the compositional world. Instead of composing, he worked on revising the works from his earlier life, with outside assistance. He continued to perform on organ and harpsichord but only through improvisation.

Composition and Genre

Glory to God is No. 17 from Handel's sacred oratorio, *Messiah* and is classified as a chorus. *Messiah* is written in three large sections typically referred to as "Christmas", "Easter", and "Resurrection".¹² The text of *Glory to God* is taken from Luke 2:14. This chorus follows the *recitative, And Suddenly There Was With the Angel*. The chorus is to depict how the heavens appeared and what they sounded like the night Christ Jesus was born.

¹¹ Ibid., 327.

¹² Ibid., 335.

Handel waited until *Glory to God* to introduce the trumpets into the accompaniment. In the score, Handel marked the trumpets with “*da lontano e un poco piano*”, meaning, from afar and somewhat quietly.¹³ Some performances have moved the trumpets off of the stage to help contribute to the sound being heard from afar.

Historical Perspective

The beautiful oratorio, *Messiah* (anointed one), was started on August 22, 1741 and finished in the same year on September 14. The piece was not first performed until April 13, 1742 in Dublin and later performed in London. The piece was received very well in Dublin, which was quite surprising because of the use of a biblical libretto. Charles Jennens took the libretto from both the New and Old Testaments. Most people believe the *Messiah* was written to celebrate the Christmas season, however it was written as an original Easter offering. This oratorio is different from Handel’s others. This is the only oratorio that does not have named characters, which was a characteristic of Handel. *Glory to God* is No. 17 of the oratorio and is a representation of the angels singing the amazing news of our Lord and Savior being born.

¹³ Watkins Shaw and Charles Jennes, *Messiah*, Novello & Company Limited, 1959.

Technical Considerations

Glory to God is a relatively easy piece to learn and perform for most high school choirs. The tessitura is written in a very comfortable range for all voices, with the exception of a few low "A's" in the bass lines. The low "A" can easily be performed up the octave for any basses that may not be able to perform them. The B section of the piece may possibly present problems with both balance and rhythmic accuracy. With the voices entering at different times, all singers must be confident in their parts. The ensemble must realize where each entrance occurs so they remain balanced.

Cut-offs should be given close attention to, so that ending consonants are clean and crisp. Singers should know which beat the consonant should be placed and the conductor should give very clear gestures to ensure the ensemble's success. Entrances should also be given much attention. The B section, with staggered entrances, could be practiced with the ensemble speaking their parts and the conductor cueing them, so they become familiar with each entrance. This will encourage singers to make their entrance strong and then *decrescendo* so the next entrance can be heard.

Stylistic Considerations

Glory to God is a rather simple piece to perform. It is not typical for the chorus to be performed alone rather, accompanied with Nos. 14, 15, and 16 of the oratorio. The original orchestration is written for strings and a *basso continuo*, with trumpets, timpani, oboes, and a bassoon in specific movements. The pieces can also be performed with an orchestral reduction played by the piano.

When performing *Glory to God*, it is important to maintain balance across the ensemble so that all parts are heard equally. Tempo should be given close attention to so the B section is not rushed. The text, although in English, should also be given specific instruction. Vowels and consonants should be unified so the text can be understood. Dynamics may not be present; depending on what publication is being used. The director should make all dynamic markings clear and concise. The end of the chorus should have a natural *diminuendo* setting the listener up for the next movement.

Musical Elements

Handel uses a great deal of text and tone painting in *Messiah*. Specifically, in *Glory to God*, text painting can be found right from the beginning of the chorus. Handel's setting of the famous words is outstandingly simple, yet very effective. "Glory to God, glory to God in the highest" is sung by the high voices (soprano, alto and tenor) while "and peace on earth" is sung by the low voices (tenor and bass) in unison, with the bass dropping an octave for "on earth". Handel utilizes the vocal ranges to show the space between heaven and earth. Oppositely, "goodwill towards men" is sung in a fast sequence of imitative entrances with the word "goodwill" on an upward fourth at every entrance. The same sequences repeat in the second half of the chorus with small alterations. The very end of the piece should diminish away from *forte* to *piano* so the listeners are ready for movement No. 18.

Form and Structure

Glory to God has a binary form of ABA1B1. Handel sets it to an SATB (soprano, alto, tenor, bass) chorus. In both A sections the text and the dynamics remain the same. Homophonic textures are present during these sections. The A section uses SAT voicing for the majority with the basses only singing the text, "and peace on earth". In A1, all four voices sing together for the first time in this movement. During both B sections, Handel uses a more polyphonic approach to the texture. The voices have staggered entrances, all-leading to a final tonic chord. The B section begins with a bass entrance while B1 begins with an alto entrance. The instrumental accompaniment is intricate during the A sections of this movement, while the vocal parts are simplified. The B sections utilize intricate vocal lines while the instrumental accompaniment is more simplified.

Text

Glory to God is a representation of Angel's singing the praise of the heavenly baby who is the King of Kings! The text is taken from Luke 2:14. In the New International Version of Luke 2:14 reads: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

Glory to God, glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good will toward

Part Three

The Classical Era

Amanti Costanti, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and arr. Patrick M. Liebergen

Amanti Costanti

From *Le Nozze di Figaro*, K492

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Arr. Patrick M. Liebergen (b. 1949)

SATB chorus, and piano accompaniment (1:45)

BriLee Music Publishing

Composer

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born in Salzburg, Austria on January 27, 1756. At a very young age Mozart started his musical instruction with his father, Leopold Mozart. Leopold was a well-known violinist and composer for the court of the prince-bishop of Salzburg. Wolfgang was considered to be a prodigy with his earliest known compositions, along with his first known public performance, dating back to 1761. Leopold took Mozart and his sister, Maria Anna, on a series of concert tours around Europe at the beginning of 1762. As a result of this tour, the Bishop of Salzburg appointed Wolfgang *Konzertmeister* in 1769. Even with his prestigious position, Wolfgang wanted to leave Salzburg. After unsuccessfully seeking other court positions, the Archbishop released Mozart from his position in Salzburg in 1781.¹⁴

¹⁴ Frank Abrahams, Heather J. Buchanan, Matthew Mehaffey, and Jerry Blackstone, *Teaching Music through Performance in Choir Vol. 1*, Chicago: GIA Publications, 2005, 184.

After leaving Salzburg, Mozart moved to Vienna, where he married Constanza Weber. His time spent in Vienna was a very prosperous time for him, as he gained favor with Emperor Joseph II, which enabled him to compose a great deal. After the death of his father in 1787, Mozart embarked on an extensive European trip with Prince Karl Lichnowsky in 1789.¹⁵

Considering his short life, Wolfgang's compositional output was quite extensive including masses, motets, operas, concertos, symphonies, chamber music, and various other genres. After moving to Frankfurt Mozart became very ill. On December 5, 1791 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart died in Vienna.

Arranger

Patrick Liebergen was born in Green Bay, Wisconsin in 1949. He received his education from St. Norbert College, University of Wisconsin, and the University of Colorado. Dr. Liebergen is currently serving as the Director of Choral Activities at the University of Wisconsin-Stout.

Along with teaching, Dr. Liebergen is also known as a prolific composer having a number of published choral works.¹⁶

Composition and Genre

Amanti Costanti is an *allegretto* (fairly brisk tempo) chorus from Mozart's Opera Buffa (comical opera), *La nozze di Figaro* (*The Marriage of Figaro*). Patrick M. Liebergen took the original score of the chorus and arranged it for SATB (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass) chorus with piano accompaniment. The score, published by BriLee Music, uses both the original Italian text and a translated English text that was provided by Liebergen.

¹⁵ Ibid., 184.

¹⁶ Alfred.com, "Dr. Patrick M. Liebergen," Alfred Music, Accessed April 20, 2014, <http://www.alfred.com/Company/Authors/DrPatrickMLiebergen.aspx>.

Historical Perspective

Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais first wrote *The Marriage of Figaro* as a play in 1778. Beaumarchais is a French author from the 1700's and is known for "two outstanding comedies of intrigue".¹⁷ *The Marriage of Figaro* was set second in the Figaro trilogy of plays following *The Barber of Seville*. Mozart was asked to write the Opera Buffa by Count Orsini-Rosenberg, director of the Burgtheater (the imperial theatre), in 1782. The play was banned from the Viennese Stage. In order for Mozart's opera of the play to be acceptable for the stage he had to be very strategic in his composition. Mozart studied a successful opera by Paisiello (*Le barbier de Seville*) that had triumphed in Vienna in 1783 and deliberately referenced the same personalities.¹⁸ He began writing the composition in late 1785 and finished the score in approximately six weeks. It was first performed on stage in 1786 in Vienna. *Amanti Costanti* is an allegretto chorus that occurs in Act III of the Opera Buffa. Patrick M. Liebergen arranged this chorus and had it published in 2011 by BriLee Music.

¹⁷ Britannica.com. "Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais." Encyclopedia Britannica. Last modified 2014. Accessed April 18, 2014.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/57673/Pierre-Augustin-Caron-de-Beaumarchais>.

¹⁸ Julian Rushton, "Nozze di Figaro, Le," *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online, Oxford University Press,
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O003136> (accessed April 18, 2014).

Technical and Stylistic Considerations

Amanti Costanti should be performed in the original Italian text for a more accurate performance of the original. However, it is up to the conductor whether they are comfortable teaching the correct pronunciation of the text and if the ensemble can accurately perform said text. The text is very repetitive making it easier to learn the proper pronunciation of the Italian words and for memorization. Patrick M. Liebergen also provides an English text that could be used instead. The piece should be performed at a brisk tempo as the text speaks of being merry and singing praises to a master. The rhythms are simple and consistently the same from one section to the next. With the use of such similar textures, rhythms, and harmonies it is up to the singers and conductors to make the piece unique and interesting. This can be accomplished through the use of dynamic contrasts, accurate Italian text and the *allegretto* tempo.

Musical Elements

This piece would be a great addition to any high school choral concert. The piece is homophonic and contains simple obtainable harmonies. Patrick M. Liebergen uses very simple rhythms throughout *Amanti Costanti* making it very accessible to inexperienced choirs. Liebergen writes the opening section with the sopranos and tenors voiced together and the altos and basses voiced together. The use of this simple duet at the beginning of the piece introduces the text and rhythms of the piece. With all voices singing these two parts together, dynamics should be given great attention. It is not until measure thirty-six that the voices sing in four-part harmony. This section is rhythmically similar to the opening duet but has an expanded texture.

Form and Structure

The form of this piece is strophic and contains two sections that can be labeled as AA1. In the A section all voices (SATB) are singing a two-part texture with the piano starting and ending the piece. The rhythms are identical with the sopranos and tenors singing the melody and the altos and basses singing the harmony. During section A1 Liebergen takes the simple textures from the A section and broadens them into four-parts. The rhythm in the sopranos and tenors is identical and the rhythms in the altos and basses are identical as well. The piano accompaniment changes, slightly, between the A and A1 sections. The dynamics in both sections of the vocal parts are identical. With the thicker texture of A1, dynamics will need special attention so all parts can equally be heard.

Text

Amanti Costanti seguaci d'onor
Constant followers lovers of honor,

Cantate, lodate sì saggio signor,
Sing the praises of a wise master,

Amanti Costanti seguaci d'onor,
Constant followers lovers of honor

Cantate, lodate sì saggio signor,
Sing the praises of a wise master,

Cantate, lodate sì saggio signor.
Sing the praises of a wise master.

A un dritto cedendo, ch'oltraggia,
Renouncing a right, outrage

Ch'offende, ei caste vi rende ai vostri amator,
Offends, and you chaste to your lover,

Ei caste vi rende ai vostri amator
And you chaste to your lover.

Cantiamo, lodiamo sì saggio signor,
Sing the praises of a wiser master,

Cantiamo, lodiamo sì saggio signor,
Sing the praises of a wiser master,

Sì saggio signor,
Wiser master,

Sì saggio signor,
Wiser Master,

Sì saggio signor.¹⁹
Wiser Master.

¹⁹ Theoryofmusic.wordpress.com, "Le Nozze di Figaro in English and Italian: Act 3,"
Theory of Music, Accessed April 28, 2014,
<http://theoryofmusic.wordpress.com/2008/10/01/le-nozze-di-figaro-in-english-and-italian-act-3/>.

Part Four

The Romantic Era

“How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place” from <i>Requiem</i> , Johannes Brahms	29
<i>Zigeunerleben</i> , Robert Schumann	36

How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place

from *Ein deutsches Requiem*, Op. 45

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

SATB Chorus and piano (5:00)

Oliver Ditson Company

Composer

Johannes Brahms was perhaps the greatest choral composer of the late Romantic era. Born in Hamburg, Germany Brahms began his musical training with his father, a string bass player in the Hamburg Philharmonic, at a very young age. At the age of seven, Brahms started lessons with a local teacher on the piano. By the age of ten he had given his first public performance. As a teenager, Brahms gave numerous piano performances in area theaters, along with arranging popular symphonic compositions that were performed by local chamber ensembles.²⁰ Other compositional pieces were written from studying the German folk songs and Roma (gypsy) music. This music was experienced by Hungarian refugees that came to Germany in early 1848. Although Brahms wrote music during the Romantic period he was a man who loved the “classics” of music. He thrived in studying the scores and lives of past composers such as Schumann, Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn, Bach, Handel along with other numerous composers from the Renaissance, Baroque, and Classical eras. The influences of these composers can be found in many of his choral works.²¹

²⁰ Dennis Shrock, *Choral Repertoire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 474.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 474.

During his twenties and thirties, Brahms made numerous musical strides which gave him much success and recognition as a composer. He conducted the court choir of Detmold, the Vienna Singakademie, and founded a women's chorus in his hometown of Hamburg.²² Because of his growing musical recognition he was privileged to work with, and became friends with, composer Robert Schumann. Brahms performed music with Schumann while being mentored by the great composer.

Brahms's music was overly judged by music critics. "Many critics in Brahms's own lifetime found his music texturally and harmonically complicated, structurally intricate, and difficult to comprehend".²³ Even though the critics were harsh, other composers who heard his music found it breathtaking and powerful. But, no matter what people said about his music, he still pushed forward and continued to compose. In 1857, shortly after the death of friend and mentor Robert Schumann, Brahms started composing his *Ein deutsches Requiem* (A German Requiem) which is considered to be one of "the best known sacred works of the Romantic era".²⁴

²² Ibid., 475.

²³ Mark Evan Bonds, *A History of Music in Western Culture*, New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc., 2006, 500.

²⁴ Ibid., 476.

Composition and Genre

How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place is taken from Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem* (A German Requiem) and it known as a sacred choral piece. The piece is classified as sacred because of its biblical text taken from Psalms eighty-four. The title of this piece signifies that the work uses German text but does not hold any reference to German nationalism. It is said that Brahms wanted to change the word "German" in the title to "Human" making it "A Human Requiem". This statement was Brahms making it clear that this requiem was for all humanity, not just the German people.

Historical Perspective

Johannes Brahms wrote *A German Requiem* in the years of 1857 and 1868. *How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place* is the IV movement of his famous *Requiem*. "The traditional Roman Catholic liturgical text for the requiem mass is a prayer for the dead, filled with images of the horrors of the Last Judgment".²⁵ However, the text that Brahms chose for his *Requiem* was taken from the Martin Luther translation of the bible that allowed for a more comforting feel. At the time that Brahms started to compose this work, he was only thirty-three years old. Even at this young age, Brahms had already experienced the pain and agony of the death of a loved one. Brahms was specifically influenced to compose after the deaths of his mother and beloved friend Robert Schumann. After their deaths he composed his brilliant work, *Requiem*. Brahms composed this piece for more than just his own grieving but was hopeful to instill a message of hope for others.²⁶

²⁵ Cascadianchorale.org, "Cascadian Chorale: Ein deutsches Requiem, op 45," Cascadian Choral, Troy Peters, Accessed January 31, 2014, <http://www.cascadianchorale.org/brahmsrequiemnotes.htm>.

²⁶ Ibid.

When choosing the text for the work, he chose carefully so that it would “create a tapestry of solace.”²⁷ At no point in this completed work is there any mention of Jesus Christ because Brahms wanted to write *A German Requiem* for all to enjoy, no matter their beliefs. A work that took eleven years of his life is one of Brahms’s longest major known works. Some musicologists have even classified this work as Brahms’ “magnum opus” (great works). Johannes Brahms, a man who was known for living a more “secret life”, allowed his heart to shine through this majestic piece of art.

Technical Considerations

How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place has several challenges found in all voice parts. Each voice part has difficult jumps/leaps and demanding intervals. Breath support is a very important key to the success of performing this piece. Singers need to control their air to maintain accurate intonation. The melody is passed from one voice to another throughout the entirety of this piece. With that being said, it is very important that the conductor makes the singers aware of the moving melody so as to not cover it up.

The English text also presents a problem. Most singers do not perform English texts correctly. A lot of times singers will spread the vowels, which will make intonation suffer. One specific phrase of words is “Lord and God”. To help with this, the conductor should have the singers sing through portions of the piece using only the vowel. This will help unify the vowel across the ensemble and fix any intonation problems that may arise. Even though this is not a foreign text, it would be helpful for the conductor to speak the text and have the ensemble repeat how each word should be pronounced. Having the singers speak the text to the exact rhythms will

²⁷ Ibid.

also help with vowel placements. If the conductor wants to take it one step further, using the Shaw chord (Bass, E; Tenor, G#; Alto, D; Soprano, F#) with the text would be very helpful in solidifying the vowels and difficult rhythmic sections.

In the soprano, tenor, and alto parts Brahms uses eighth note runs between measures one hundred and twenty-six through one hundred and thirty-seven. This could present a problem within voice parts for immature choirs. Encouraging singers to keep a lighter sound will make the rhythms more accurate and simultaneously articulated.

Stylistic Considerations

How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place is part of one of the best-known sacred works from the Romantic time era, *A German Requiem*. This piece is suitably written for advanced high school choirs and collegiate level choirs. With the melody being isolated and passed from voice to voice it is a great piece to show off each voice part of the ensemble. The use of polyphony can present a challenge if not rehearsed correctly so all voice parts feel comfortable and secure. Arrangements can be found for piano and voice only or with full orchestra. This piece can be challenging for some inexperienced choirs due to its higher tessitura, length and polyphonic phrases. The conductor should be mindful of the rubati tempos, expressive dynamics, phrasing and the need for a full ensemble sound.

Musical Elements

Brahms uses the key of E-flat major throughout the piece with a few modulations in-and-out of G minor. Throughout the entire work, Brahms does a great job of tone painting. His use of tone painting works hand in hand with the biblical text from Psalms. Specifically looking at the text “my soul and body crieth out” Brahms begins the phrase in a lower tessitura and expands the voices on the text “crieth out” almost as if the singers were physically crying out to God. Again, with the text “they praise Thy name evermore” the tiered entrances evoke the painting of praises continuing all of eternity.

Large intervals can be found in all voice parts throughout this piece making intonation a challenge. The soprano tessitura is rather high which could present a pinched or strained sound out of less experienced singers. If choosing to perform this with a high school choir it would be wise of the conductor to choose the strongest sopranos to sing the higher phrases and move the others to the alto line. Another option would be to do vocalize that will help them build a stronger upper range.

Form and Structure

Brahms uses an ABACA1 form, which is different from all the other movements of *A German Requiem*. He uses a good mixture of polyphony and homophony in all sections of this piece. The first two sections of A are fairly similar with the exception of a few rhythmic and note differences. The voices are singing homophonic lines with the same text. The B section starts in measure sixty-five where both the text and music share a longing to praise. The dynamics build to accompany the vocal ranges. At measure one hundred and fifteen section C is introduced. During this section all voices enter together and then in measure one hundred and twenty-three, Brahms uses tiered entrances starting with the sopranos, basses, altos, and then tenors. During the final section of A, Brahms uses duets in the soprano and tenor and then in the alto and bass before going back to the same homophonic text used in the first two phrases of A.

Text

The overall idea/theme of the text is truly beautiful! Brahms used text from Psalm 84 which expresses a sense of the need for divine worship. The psalmist states that he dreams of the place where his God lives and that he wishes for a room in the house so that he may praise Him with song. This piece can be found in both German and English texts for performance.

How lovely is your dwelling place,

O Lord of hosts!

My soul longs, indeed it faints

for the courts of the Lord;

my heart and my flesh sing for joy

to the living God.

Happy are those who live in your house.

ever singing your praise.

Zigeunerleben

Op. 29, No. 3

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

SATB and piano accompaniment (3:30)

Alfred Publishing Company

Composer

On June 8, 1810 the composer Robert Schumann was born in Zwickau, Germany. Neither of Schumann's parents were involved in music. His father made a name for himself as an author and lexicographer (the writing and editing of dictionaries). In Schumann's early years, he demonstrated skills in both the world of literature and music. At the age of sixteen Schumann's father sent him to study law at the University of Leipzig. Schuman continued to study law until he was able to convince his mother that he truly desired to study music.²⁸

In 1830 Schumann began studying piano under the tutelage of the famous Friedrich Wieck. His daughter, Clara Wieck, was already a famous composer and pianist and Schumann could not resist falling smitten with this young woman. Some historians called the two lovers in 1835.²⁹

“His own ambitions as a pianist were hampered by a weakness in the fingers of one hand (possibly caused by the syphilis that would later claim his sanity), by the 1830's nevertheless brought a number of marvelous compositions for the instrument”.³⁰

²⁸ HumanitiesWeb.org, “Robert Schumann-Biography,” Humanities Web, Last modified 2012, Accessed February 16, 2014, www.humanitiesweb.org/spa/cai/ID/739.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

A large majority of Schumann's pieces have been distinguished for their links to the world of literature. "Many of his compositions allude to characters of scenes from poems, novels, and plays; others are like musical crossword puzzles with key signatures of musical themes that refer to people of places important to him".³¹ Schumann's close understanding of literature gave his music a unique quality. It is that quality that makes Robert Schumann's music stand the test of time.

Along with loving both music and literature, Schumann also had a desire for being a journalist. The *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* was his own musical magazine that he not only wrote for but was also the editor of the magazine. With the use of his magazine, Schumann was able to compose in his world of music and also keep up with the "Romantic musical scene at large".³²

Schumann and Clara eventually married, after a long struggle and of not gaining acceptance from her father. The two lovers did not have what might be considered a standard wedding. With a fighting father to keep the two as far apart as he could, Schumann and Clara went before a court to be married.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

In 1850, after being appointed the Music Director to the city of Dusseldorf, Schumann's health took a turn for the worse. With his rapidly declining physical health, Schumann resigned from composing in 1853.³³ Schumann worried himself constantly about the possibility of going insane, so much so that he caused himself to have a mental breakdown. In 1854, due to the break-down, he tried to commit suicide by throwing himself into the river Rhine. After this attempt, the great Robert Schumann was committed to an asylum where he stayed until his death on July 29, 1856.

Composition and Genre

Zigeunerleben is the third movement of Schumann's *Drei Deichte* (Three Poems) Op. 29. The work was written shortly after marrying Clara in 1840. It was during this time that Schumann moved into a creative time of composing. He found himself composing less piano music and more vocal music. This piece is scored for an unusual mixing of soprano, alto, tenor, and bass voices, triangle, and tambourine. Both the triangle and tambourine are optional. A well-known writer of "gypsy poems", Emmanuel Geibel, wrote the texts for all three poems.

³³ Ibid.

Historical Perspective

Robert Schumann composed the piece *Drei Gedichte* (Three Poems) in 1840 using three poems from Emmanuel Geibel, a German Romantic poet. The three movements are *Ländliches Lied* (Rural Song), *Lied* (Song), and *Zigeunerleben*. *Zigeunerleben* is an upbeat secular piece that speaks of the mysterious gypsy life. It is one of the most popular pieces for mixed voices. The piece is inspired by the Roma (gypsy) music, which was very popular in Germany at the time. Both the text and rhythms of Schumann's piece represent the "stereotype of Gypsy life as wild, natural, nomadic, and sensual—the life of the 'natural Bohemian'".³⁴

Schumann shows hints of his own life in this marvelous piece. Suffering from a series of mental health issues throughout his life Schumann believed he had two separate identities. One side he named Florestan and the other Eusebius. Florestan represented his romantic nature and Eusebius represented his more intentional side.³⁵ This idea followed very close to the actual thoughts and actions of the Gypsy life. After marrying Clara in 1840, Schumann began to write like he never had before. He composed several song cycles, including *Zigeunerleben*, which incorporates a balanced mixture of passion and music. Schumann and Clara's love story is considered to be the most passionate and romantic love stories of the nineteenth century music history. In fact, Schumann wrote images of himself and Clara in the song as the young Gypsy swain (Robert) and the beautiful, fair maiden (Clara).³⁶

³⁴ Griffinchoralarts.org, "Gypsies & Storytellers Program Notes," Griffin Choral Arts, Last modified 2008, Accessed April 22, 2014, <http://www.griffinchoralarts.org/index.php/GS-Notes.html#schumann>.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

Technical Considerations

Zigeunerleben is an accessible piece for most choirs. The range is comfortable for both the basses and altos where some sopranos and tenors could find their parts to be a little uncomfortable at times. The ranges for the sections are: sopranos, E4-G5; altos, A3-E4; tenors, D3-G4; and basses, G2-E4. This piece is generally homophonic with a brief moment of polyphony in mm. 20-23. The conductor should pay close attention to this relatively imitative section, as it could present a problem for the singers during the first few times through the piece.

Zigeunerleben can be classified into three separate sections. The opening and closing sections are set in E minor with the center section set in C Major. The opening and closing sections are soft and mystifying. They are both very similar in structure with insignificant changes to the closing section. The middle section uses a “long-short-long” rhythm and a broader vocal sound. The middle section also introduces short mischievous solo passages for all voices parts. These solo parts introduce the text describing gypsies at play. The solos are a great way for the conductor to showcase members of their choir from each section. Along with the solos, Schumann also utilizes two, smaller, duets for two sopranos and two tenors. The duets are a great option for less experienced singers as the piano supports them both melodically and harmonically.

Although *Zigeunerleben* is a great piece for choirs to perform, it still comes with its challenges. One of the biggest challenges of this piece is the swift moving German text. To help the singers be successful while singing the piece the conductor first should make the decision of performing in the original German or English. More mature choirs would be successful with the German text, while younger choirs would most likely do better with a chosen poetic English text. Several publications are available with different poetic translations of Emanuel Geibel's text. If a conductor chooses to perform the piece in German, they will need to prepare to coach their singers in proper pronunciation of the text. Another challenge of this piece is having the singers maintain a lighter and more articulated sound throughout the piece. Schumann kept *Zigeunerleben* in four parts until the last several measures where the basses split into two parts. In the division, the baritones are given a chromatic descending line that can be difficult to keep in tune. To help with this, the conductor should encourage a lighter and more energetic production with solid breath support.

Schumann took great lengths in illustrating the text in *Zigeunerleben*. He illustrated the text with delicate tempo changes and striking dynamic changes. In teaching this piece, the conductor should take great care of the text by paying close attention to the delivery of the text by using clean and accurate articulations. To help the singers feel more accomplished, the conductor should separate the German from the music when first learning the piece. Using a neutral syllable such as "doo" will help in the lighter sound needed to appropriately reflect the text. Once the singers feel secure with their pitches the text can be added, one section at a time. Chanting the text will encourage appropriate word stress and "text-to-rhythm" accuracy.

Stylistic Considerations

Robert Schumann had an innate understanding of poetry, which is very evident in *Zigeunerleben*. “He believed in making music a ‘resonant echo’ of the text.”³⁷ Both conductor and performers should take the text of this piece very serious alike. The conductor should take the necessary time to clarify how the melodies, harmonies, and rhythms come together with the text to create Schumann’s desired “resonant echo”. When looking at the opening vocal lines of the piece, the altos and sopranos sing a duet in parallel thirds. These two voices represent the sound of two violins in a musical dialogue with the piano, triangle, and tambourine.

With the mixture of voice, piano, tambourine, and triangle the timbre and articulation must remain very accurate. Schumann utilizes the piano to represent the mysterious gypsy lifestyle. He used dance-like-rhythms, clever accents, and numerous and exaggerated dynamics. The piano part is particularly challenging and requires an accomplished pianist.

Musical Elements

Zigeunerleben is a dramatic and lively piece of music. Schumann composed this piece in three different sections. The opening and closing of the piece are written in E minor and utilizes a natural minor scale with an augmented fourth. This specific minor scale is called the Hungarian “gypsy” scale. These sections have abrupt rhythm changes and drastic dynamic changes. The middle section of the piece changes from minor to major. The rhythms become less ridged and more sustained. The dynamics during this section become expansive and broad.

³⁷ Heather J Buchanan, *Teaching Music through Performance in Choir*, GIA Publications, Inc., 2005, 293.

Form and Structure

Schumann composed this piece with the form and text being closely related. The text of *Zigeunerleben* describes a night in a gypsy camp. The piece starts in E minor with a theme that paints the picture of the gypsies silently arriving. Schumann uses the same motives in the closing of the piece, in E minor, to depict the gypsies mysteriously leaving. The middle section of the piece is written in a major key. Schumann uses the playful rhythms to depict the gypsies' lifestyle by a blazing campfire. Musically he expresses the mysteriousness of the gypsy dancing, story telling, singing, playing instruments, drinking, eating, and sleeping.

Text

The text of this piece describes all of the experiences seen and felt by a Roma (gypsy). The poet, Emanuel Geibel, uses the text to paint a picture of Roma life to the listeners. The translations are from the Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire by Ron Jeffers and Gordon Paine.

Im Schatten des Waldes, im Buchengezweig
In the shadows of the forest, in the beech branches,

da regt's sich und raschelt und flüstert zugleich.
There stirs it – and rustles and whispers together.

Es flackern die Flammen, es gaukelt der Schein
- flares the flames, - flutters the light

um bunte Gestalten, um Laub und Gestein.
Around many-colored figures, around leaves and rocks

Da ist der Zigeuner bewegte Schar
There is the Gypsy wandering band,

mit blitzendem Aug' und wallendem Haar,
with lightning-like eyes and with wild, flowing hair,
gesäugt an des Niles geheiligter Flut,
nursed at the Nile's sacred flow,

gebräunt von Hispaniens südlicher Glut.
Burned from Spain's southern warmth.

Um's lodernde Feuer in schwellendem Grün
Around the blazing fire, in swelling greenery,

da lagern die Männer verwildert und kühn,
there lie the men wild and bold;

da kauern die Weiber und rüsten das Mahl
there crouch the women and prepare the meal,

und füllen geschäftig den alten Pokal.
And fill busily the old goblet.

Und Sagen und Lieder ertönen im Rund,
And legends and songs resound in the circle,

wie Spaniens Gärten so blühend und bunt,
of Spanish gardens so florid and colorful,

und magische Sprüche für Not und Gefahr
and magic sayings for need and danger

verkündet die Alte der horchenden Schar.
Proclaims the old woman to the attentive band.

Schwarzäugige Mädchen beginnen den Tanz,
Black-eyed maidens begin the dance.

da sprühen die Fackeln in rötlichem Glanz,
There spark the torches in the reddish glow.

es lockt die Gitarre, die Cymbel klingt,
- beckons the guitar, the cymbal rings,

wie wild und wilder der Reigen sich schwingt.
As wild and wilder the round dance itself weaves.

Dann ruh'n sie ermüdet vom nächtlichen Reih'n;
Then rest they weary from the nocturnal dance,

es rauschen die Buchen in Schlummer sie ein.
- rustle the beech trees, in sleep they are

Und die aus der glücklichen Heimat verbannt,
And they from the happy homeland banned,

sie schauen im Träume das glückliche Land.
They see in a dream the happy land.

Doch wie nun im Osten der Morgen erwacht,
But as now in the east the morning awakes,

verlöschen die schönen Gebilde der Nacht;
vanish the beautiful images of the night,

es scharret das Maultier bei Tagesbeginn,
- paws the mule with day's beginning,

*fort zieh'n die Gestalten, wer sagt dir, wohin?*³⁸
Away draw the figures – who says to you whither?

³⁸ Ron Jeffers and Gordon Paine, *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire, Volume 2: German Texts*, Corvallis, Oregon: Earthsongs, 2000 and 2011.

Part Five

The 20th Century

<i>La Loo, La Low</i> , Sandra Howard	47
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La Loo, La Low

Sandra Howard (b. 1958)

Two-Part chorus, with optional Descant,
and piano accompaniment (2:30)

BriLee Music Publishing

Composer

Sandra Howard is a native of Orangeburg, South Carolina who currently teaches music at Main Street Elementary School in Lake City, South Carolina. Howard is a graduate of Furman University and holds a Bachelor of Music in Music Education. She also holds a Master of Music degree in conducting from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. While attending the Southern Seminary she worked with Dr. Philip Landgrave. Howard is known as an educator, performer, and composer. She has taught general music and choir in middle, elementary, preschool using the Suzuki method, and teaches privately on piano and voice. She is currently the director of the Hartsville Children's Choral in Hartsville, South Carolina. As a performer, she has sung with the Furman Singers under director Dr. Bingham Vick, the Atlanta Symphony Chorus and Chamber Chorus under the direction of Robert Shaw. Howard is a published composer of middle school choral music. Her pieces can be found through Carl Fischer Music and BriLee Music Publishing Company.³⁹

³⁹ Sandrahoward.com, "About Sandra," Sandra Howard, Composer, <http://sandrahoward.com/about-me/> (accessed April 1, 2014).

Composition and Genre

La Loo, La Low was composed by Sandra Howard and published in 2000 by the BriLee Music Company. This piece is classified as A Christmas Lullaby, but with no specific mention of Christmas in the text; it can be performed at any time of the year. The piece is composed for a two-part ensemble with an optional descant and piano accompaniment. The tessituras range from an octave to just over an octave, making it suitable for all elementary choruses.

Historical Perspective

La Loo, La Low was the first piece that Sandra Howard ever submitted for publication and was the first piece she ever had published.⁴⁰ Brian Busch, founder and president of BriLee Music, quickly became one of Howard's publisher and mentor as a composer. Busch encouraged Howard to continue composing and submitting for publication. Today Howard has approximately fifteen published works, most of which are published by BriLee Music.

Technical Considerations

La Loo, La Low should be performed with a beautiful, tender, and pure tone quality. The text of the piece, although sung in English, should be given special attention so that all vowels and consonants become unified. The words "lullaby" and "bye" could present a problem with a diphthong. Encourage singers to stay on an "ah", watch for the release, and then form a gentle "ee" vowel at the very end. Also, Howard uses long phrases that will require good breath control. To help, have singers *crescendo* into each phrase, especially the longer ones.

⁴⁰ Drew Collins, "BriLee's Brian Busch: Man With a Mission" *Choral Director: The Choral Director's Management Magazine*, September 6, 2007, Accessed April 14, 2014, <http://www.choraldirectormag.com/1498/articles/repertoire-forum/brilees-brian-busch-man-with-a-mission-4/>.

Howard wrote this piece in 6/8 meter while several of the vocal lines are notated in 3/4. This specific notation occurs when the vocal line has the rhythm of two-quarter notes and two eighth notes. Howard used this rhythmic notation to give the feeling of “rhythmic evenness” and is used in measures nine, eleven, twenty-nine, and thirty-one.

Stylistic Considerations

The dynamic markings never go above *mezzo piano*, however, this does not mean interpretation of the text and musical phrases should not occur. It is important for the singers and conductor to follow the rise and fall of each phrase. Increase energy and decrease energy as the melodic lines rise and fall. This will allow the piece to have a unique delivery every time. Lastly, each release of the phrase should be handled gently and with great accuracy.

The end of the piece should *decrescendo* until the sounding tone stops. Be aware that the singers should not end the sound by closing their mouths but simply by the tone fading away.

Encourage singers to leave their mouths in the form of an “ah” so the sound can continue without being chopped off.⁴¹

⁴¹ Sandra Howard, *La Loo, La Low* (New York, NY: BriLee Music Publishing Co., 2000).

Musical Elements

This piece is a great piece for most elementary choruses. It is a lullaby and is often times associated with the holiday season. This piece could appropriately be performed at Christmas time or any other time of the year because of the lack of Christmas text. The time signature is 6/8, which is a fairly uncommon signature for most elementary choirs. Sandra Howard makes the rhythms and melodies easily accessible for all singers. She utilizes a mixture of unison and two-part singing that allows young singers to feel accomplished and successful. The harmonizing parts are written in thirds, which is the easiest way to get young singers singing different parts.

Form and Structure

La Loo, La Low is through composed. The vocal melodies are the same throughout, but the piano accompaniment changes from section-to-section. In m. 48 the piano takes on a more soloist role while the vocals sing on a neutral syllable of "oo". In each section of the piece the piano grows in rhythmic difficulty. Sandra Howard uses the driving piano eighth notes and sixteenth notes to keep the forward motion. The piece is composed in 6/8 while some measures evoke the feeling of 3/4, specifically in the vocal lines.

Text

Gentle wind from the ocean,

Gentle wave from the sea.

Let the music of the ocean waves rock my little one to sleep.

Singing la loo, la low, lullaby, bye, bye.

La loo, la low, lullaby, lullaby, bye bye.

Quiet breeze from the mountain,

Gentle song of the stream.

Let the music of the mountaintops rock my little ones to sleep.

Singing la loo, la low, lullaby, bye, bye.

La loo, la low, lullaby, lullaby, bye bye.

Ooo...

Singing la loo, la low, lullaby, bye, bye.

La loo, la low, lullaby, lullaby, bye bye.

Lullaby, bye bye.⁴²

⁴² Ibid.

Little Tree

Sally Albrecht (b. 1954)

Two-Part Chorus and Piano accompaniment (2:00)

Alfred Publishing Co., Inc.

Composer

Sally K. Albrecht is a well-known choral conductor, clinician, and composer. She is especially known for her contributions to the choral movement. She received her education from Rollins College and The University of Miami. As an award winning composer, Albrecht has over three hundred popular choral publications, over fifty elementary songbooks and musicals, and fifteen choral movement instructional DVDs. Albrecht has a very extensive conducting resume which includes directing hundreds of honor choir events and festivals at Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, and the Kennedy Center. "For over three decades, she was the Director of School Choral Publications for two major educational music publishing companies."⁴³ As a clinician, Albrecht has worked with thousands of teachers and conducted workshops in over forty states, Canada, Singapore, and Australia.

⁴³ Sally K. Albrecht, "Sally Albrecht," <http://www.alfred.com/Company/Authors/SallyAlbrecht.aspx> (accessed January 20, 2014).

Composition and Genre

Little Tree is a two-part choral ballade typically used during the Christmas season. This piece is also available in other voicings such as: SATB, 3-part mixed, and SSA. Sally Albrecht and Jay Althouse worked together to compose this music together. Albrecht wrote the words based on the poem “Little Tree” by E. E. Cummings (1894-1962). The text speaks of a Christmas tree, although it is never named. The words describe the tree as being small and afraid. During the B section of the piece the tree gets dressed up with decorations, making it beautiful.

Historical Perspective

Little Tree was composed by Sally K. Albrecht and Jay Althouse. Albrecht had been a choral editor for approximately thirty years. She, however, did not begin composing until 1982.⁴⁴ Alfred Publishing Co., Inc. published *Little Tree* in 2007. Albrecht found inspiration for the text from “Little Tree”, a poem by Edward Estlin Cummings. The poem was written in 1920 and is considered a free verse poem. Cummings was born in 1894 and died in 1962 and was an American poet and painter.

⁴⁴ Wendy McKee, “Choral Conversations – Sally Albrecht,” *The Pepper Blog*, October 5, 2010, Accessed April 22, 2014, <http://blogs.jwpepper.com/?p=1662>.

Technical Considerations

Although *Little Tree* is a relatively easy piece, it still demands technical consideration. Sally Albrecht does not use dynamics over a *mezzo forte* until m. 27 where she uses *forte* for a brief four measures. With these hushed dynamic levels, the piece can evoke the feeling of a child whispering to their Christmas tree. For most young singers, maintaining dynamics of *piano* and *mezzo piano* can present difficulties with intonation. To help maintain good intonation, encourage singers to use good breath support throughout the piece.

The occasional use of E-flat and A-flat in the vocal parts, these could catch young singers off guard. These parts should be isolated and given special attention. Albrecht uses simple rhythms throughout *Little Tree* but often has the voices entering on an off-beat. This type of entrance could cause inexperienced singers to enter too early or too late. To help with these entrances, the singers should speak the text so they can feel where each entrance occurs.

Stylistic Considerations

Little Tree is a ballade with soft dynamics, simple rhythms, and long phrases. Albrecht marks the piece to be performed as “wistfully”. The singers should maintain a pure, clear tone throughout. The piece begins with the option of a soloist or a small group. With a dynamic of *piano* a soloist would be the best option, but if a small group is the conductor’s option, be sure to maintain the desired dynamic level. Young singers may attempt to sing this piece with more of a “pop” sound, scooping in and out of pitches. Encourage singers to arrive at each pitch with precise accuracy so intonation does not suffer. The text should be given careful consideration so vowels and consonants are aligned.

Musical Elements

Little Tree is in the key of F Major. It remains primarily diatonic, with the occasional use of an E-flat and A-flat in both the vocal and piano parts. The texture of this piece is a mixture of homophony and counterpoint. The rhythmic components of this piece are simple and obtainable by most elementary choirs. The tempo remains constant throughout with the quarter note equaling 84, and the dynamics are clearly marked in the score for both accompanist and vocalists. The ^{range}tessitura is just over an octave and accessible for all elementary choirs. There is an option of a soloist or small group at the beginning of the piece. This is a great opportunity to showcase talents from within the choir.

Form and Structure

The form of *Little Tree* is ABA1. During the first A section (mm. 1-24) the piano enters with a simple rhythm and melodic phrase in the treble clef. In m. 4 a soloist/small group enters and continues through m. 12. In m. 12 the whole ensemble enters using an echo which invokes pockets of harmony. The dynamic level remains *piano* during this section. Section B (mm. 25-35) has a staggered entrance between voices. The dynamics start at *mezzo forte* and gradually *crescendo* to *forte* by m. 26. Both voice parts alternate from singing in unison to harmonies of thirds. By m. 31 they start a gradual *decrescendo* and a *ritardando* (m. 33) until finally ending the B section in unison on *mezzo piano*. Finally, in section A1 (mm.36-52), The piano (m. 36-38) plays similarly to the beginning of the piece, this time with utilizing both clefs and the right hand playing up an octave. The voices enter with a tiered entrance in m. 38 and move quickly to homophony by m. 40. By m. 42 the staggered entrances return and remain until ending on thirds in m. 51 to create the tonic chord of F major. Dynamically this section begins at a *mezzo piano* (m. 38) and remains at that level until a *decrescendo* through m. 49 to a *piano* by m. 50. The piece ends with the voices fading with another *decrescendo* and a single *stacatto* quarter note F in the base.

Text

The text of *Little Tree* was inspired by a poem by E. E. Cummings called "Little Tree". His poem was first published in "The Dial vol. LXVIII, No. 1" in January of 1920.⁴⁵

Little tree, little silent Christmas tree,

You are so little, more like a flower

Who found you? Little tree.

Little tree, little silent Christmas tree,

Were you sorry to leave the forest?

I'll comfort you, little tree.

Don't be afraid.

Put up your arms.

I'll dress you up with spangles, beads, and charms,

And lights that glow, and tinsel and snow.

I'll give them all to you, I'll give them all to you, little tree.

Little tree, little silent Christmas tree,

You are so little, more like a flower.

Who found you? Little tree, little tree, little tree.

⁴⁵ Poetry-Archive.com, "Little Tree," http://www.poetry-archive.com/c/little_tree.html (accessed April 21, 2014).

Rejoice In The Lamb

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

SATB Solos, SATB Chorus and Organ accompaniment (15:00)

Boosey & Hawkes Inc.

Composer

Benjamin Britten was born in 1913 in Lowestoft, Suffolk, England. He spent the majority of his life working in England as a conductor, composer and pianist. Britten is known for his use of a new style of tonal music in his compositions. Other composers during this time preferred atonal techniques, which allowed Britten to become one of the most successful twentieth century English composers. Growing up in Suffolk, Britten was active in sports along with studying piano and drama. He obtained large achievements on the piano. "By the age of 14, he catalogued 100 opus numbers and began studying composition with Frank Bridge".⁴⁶ Over time, Britten moved to London where he studied at the Royal College of Music. While there he won several prizes for his compositions. Benjamin Britten quickly left his trademark in the musical world with film, radio, stage, symphonic, chamber and choral genres. Some of his compositional output includes: *Peter Grimes*, *A Hymn to St. Cecelia*, *War Horse Requiem*, and *A Ceremony of Carols*.

⁴⁶ Frank Abrahams, Heather J. Buchanan, Matthew Mehaffey, and Jerry Blackstone, "The Last Words of David," *Teaching Music through Performance in Choir Vol. 1*, ed. Lani Johnson (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2005), 272.

Composition and Genre

Rejoice in the Lamb is a Festival Cantata made up of ten short sections. The composition is a total of fifteen minutes in length and intended for Chorus (SATB) with Treble, Alto, Tenor, and Bass solos. It is to be accompanied by an organ.⁴⁷

Historical Perspective

In March of 1943, Rev. Walter Hussey, Minister of St. Matthew's Church in Northampton, wrote a letter to Benjamin Britten. He was inquiring if Britten would consider writing a piece that would help to bring music back to the church for their 50th Anniversary celebration. The celebration was to take place in September of that same year. At that time, the arts and the church were, in a sense, divorced. This separation made Rev. Hussey very upset. He knew how important it was to worship through music. Shortly after Britten received this letter he responded with the same sentiments about the church and music as Hussey.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Sfchoral.org, "Benjamin Britten: Rejoice in the Lamb," San Francisco Choral Society, Last modified 2001, Accessed January 25, 2014, <http://www.sfchoral.org/site/benjamin-britten-rejoice-in-the-lamb/>.

⁴⁸ Benjamin Britten, *Rejoice in the Lamb*, Boosey & Hawkes Inc., 1943.

The piece itself was started in May of 1943 and completed in July of 1943. Britten chose sections from a beautiful poem by Christopher Smart titled "Rejoice in the Lamb" for his libretto. Smart was not a well-known poet at the time Britten chose to use his poem. The theme of the work is based on *Benedicite Omnia opera*, which is a canticle (song or chant) used in the Roman Catholic Liturgy. This work uses some of God's creatures to give a testimony of His great glory. Two of the animals used are a mouse and a cat. Britten gives the cat the name Jeffry and has a complete section of the cantata to be sung by a boy soloist. Britten wanted to show worship for God by all created beings and things, each of which worship in their own unique way.

After the premiere performance of this piece on September 21, 1943, under the direction of Benjamin Britten, the audiences loved what they heard. Not only was this specific piece performed at St. Matthew's Church but the BBC Home Service also broadcast it on October 31, 1943. The work was what Rev. Hussey wanted to bring music back to the church. Still to this day it has left a lasting impression on church music in the Catholic Church.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Sfchoral.org, "Benjamin Britten: Rejoice in the Lamb," San Francisco Choral Society, Last modified 2001, Accessed January 25, 2014, <http://www.sfchoral.org/site/benjamin-britten-rejoice-in-the-lamb/>.

Technical Considerations

The reoccurring elements of this piece are the drastic and frequent meter changes. Britten uses thirty different meter changes with the use of nine different meter markings in the first section of the cantata. With this large amount of change in such a short period of time, it is critical that the singers, conductor, and organist maintain the same micro-beat. The use of the micro-beat will help a great deal with clean entrances and keep rhythms synched for the entire piece.

Stylistic Considerations

Benjamin Britten went to great lengths to demonstrate praise to God throughout this piece. In sections eight and nine, the singers are to portray musical instruments of praise. Trumpets, cymbals, harps, and flutes are just a few of the instruments used during these sections. The words being sung have a rhyming scheme. The use of good diction and clear vowels and consonants will help the text to be heard. To help with this, have the choir speak the text, using the rhythm, to practice unifying both vowels and consonants.⁵⁰

Musical Elements

This Festival Cantata is scored for SATB (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass) Soloists and an SATB Chorus, and is to be accompanied by an Organ. During the very rhythmic “Hallelujah” sections of this cantata the singers’ dynamics are very hushed. With such small dynamics singers can lose energy and therefore their tone can suffer. To help with this, the singers need to maintain superior breath control and contain energy behind the breath. Feeling the micro-beat will also help the singers during the very rhythmic phrases.

⁵⁰ Benjamin Britten, *Rejoice in the Lamb*, Boosey & Hawkes Inc., 1943.

Form and Structure

This piece is a Cantata that is made up of ten short sections. All of the sections tell a different part of the story and use a mixture of full chorus and solo voices. The first and second section is sung by a chorus of singers and portrays the theme of the Cantata, and introduces people from the Old Testament and creatures showing their praise to God. The third section is a quiet Hallelujah and is performed by a full ensemble. Sections four and five discuss the life of a cat (Jeffry) as being/doing exactly what God intended him to be, a cat (the symbol of nature) and a mouse. A treble soloist performs section four and an alto soloist performs section five. In section six the tenor soloist continues to sing of the flower, which is considered to be a piece of poetry from God. In the score this section is marked to be performed sweetly. The chorus sings the seventh section. This is a very passionate and slow chorus that describes the pain and suffering of humans. But even in despair we should give praise to our creator because He is the only one who can deliver us from such dark pits. Words such as “lamenting” and “passionate” are even printed in the score. Sections eight and nine use a bass soloist in the form of a recitative and the full chorus. Four letters, H, K, L, and M, are used in the recitative. Each letter is the first letter of an adjective that describes God. The full chorus enters for section nine and speaks of musical instruments in use of praising the King-of-Kings. The final section, section ten, is a complete repeat of third section, the Hallelujah.⁵¹

⁵¹ Ibid.

Text

The text is taken from the poem "Rejoice in the Lamb" by Christopher Smart, an 18th Century poet.⁵² Smart was considered to be quite religious but did not have a very sound mind. The original title was in Latin: "Jubilate Agno". Christopher Smart wrote this poem while he was in an asylum and was not completed until near his release date in 1763.⁵³ Each section of the cantata contains a different text. The text is "chaotic in form but contains many flashes of genius."⁵⁴

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Part Six

The 21st Century

Sure On This Shinning Night, Morten Lauridsen 65

O magnum mysterium, Morten Lauridsen 71

Sure On This Shining Night

No. 3 from *Nocturnes*

Morten Lauridsen (b. 1943)

SATB chorus and piano (4:50)

Songs of Peer, Ltd

Composer

Morten Lauridsen was born in Washington State, and studied at Whitman College and the University of Southern California and Whitman College during the 1970's. He studied composition with Harold Owen, Halsey Stevens, Ingolf Dahl and Robert Linn. He is known as one of American's most prolific composers, and the "American Choral Master" by the National Endowment for the Arts in 2006. To this day his compositions are finding unprecedented popularity throughout the United States and the United Kingdom.

Lauridsen's compositions capture audiences with suspensions, tender attention to text and the use of "added note chords".⁵⁵ His compositions are known for utilizing musical textures from Renaissance techniques and word painting. "Lauridsen created a transcendent mysticism with his shimmering, serene, and fluid writing".⁵⁶ Currently, Morten Lauridsen is the professor of music at the University of Southern California. Some of his works include: *Lux Aeterna* (a song cycle), *O Magnum Mysterium*, *Dirait-on*, *Mid-Winter Songs*, and *Madirgali: Six "Firesongs" on Italian Renaissance Poems*.

⁵⁵ Frank Abrahams, Heather J. Buchanan, Matthew Mehaffey, and Jerry Blackstone, "The Last Words of David," in *Teaching Music through Performance in Choir Vol. 1*, ed. Matthew W. Mehaffey and Anthony Reeves (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2005), 235.

⁵⁶ James G. Smith, et al, "Choral music," *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/A2218820> (accessed November 20, 2013).

Composition and Genre

Sure On This Shining Night is a nocturne. A nocturne is a musical composition that is inspired by the night. Historically, the term nocturne dates back to the nineteenth century and was primarily a character piece for piano.

Historical Perspective

Sure On This Shining Night is the third piece to the song cycle *Nocturnes*. *Nocturnes* incorporates the theme of night in each of the three arrangements. Each of the pieces is in a different language using French, Spanish and English. The pieces may be performed separately or together. However, if performed together, most times a fourth piece (the *Epilogue*) will be added after the performance of *Sure On This Shining Night*. This is the seventh song cycle composed by Lauridsen. He wrote this as a song cycle because he has an interest in poetry and the universal theme of night surrounding the pieces.

The text of this piece was taken from the book "Permit Me Voyage" written by James Agee in 1934. The music was not written until 2005 by Morten Lauridsen. The text and the music of this piece work beautifully together to paint a picture of a shining night. This piece was originally written for a mixed choir of SATB voicing. It can also be found and performed with men's chorus and two part voices.

Technical Considerations

The piece is written for SATB voicing, with occasional vocal division, and piano. This piece is beautifully written to be accessible to most high school and college choirs. The vocal parts share the melody throughout the piece. Lauridsen uses a great deal of unison and part-singing, making the piece challenging when trying to balance the ensemble.

The accompaniment is beautifully written to support the vocal lines but not to overwhelm the singers with continual “unison” parts. It is harmonically and rhythmically contrasting for the majority of the piece. Rhythmically it drives the piece during the development section (starting in m. 25).

The tessitura for each vocal part is in a comfortable range. However, Lauridsen does give an optional A2 (A below middle C) for m. 9 in the bass part.

Stylistic Considerations

Morten Lauridsen does a brilliant job of piecing the music and text together to create remarkable amounts of text/tone painting. The word “shine” or “shining” is used quite often during this piece. Almost every time these words are sung, the vocal parts soar; evoking a picture of something brilliantly shining under the moonlight and stars. An example can be seen when looking at mm. 20-23. The voices soar and create swell of dynamic contrast before concluding on the word “night”.

Musical Elements

Sure On This Shining Night is composed for piano and a mixed choir of SATB voices. The tempo is written to be “flowing, tempo rubato”. Morten Lauridsen switches between *a tempo* (first tempo) and the use of *ritardando* (the gradual slowing of the beat) in this piece which can be a challenge for some choirs to execute as a group without special consideration. The vocal parts are all written in a comfortable range. With the use of unison singing, singers need to pay close attention to dynamic markings so that the group is balanced. In m. 11 and m. 21, the music lends itself to a short pause, almost like a *fermata* (the sustaining of a pitch).

Lauridsen also uses a great deal of meter changes, going between 3/4, 2/4, and 4/4. Sometimes the meter changes happen for only a measure before changing again. In m. 39 and m. 40, the piano and vocal parts create a *hemiola* (the use of 3 against 2).

Form and Structure

This piece is in sonata form with occasional variation. The tenors and basses of the choir introduce the opening theme in unison. It is then introduced again by the sopranos and altos, in unison as well while the tenors and basses add a variation of harmonies below. The pattern of alternation between the men opening and the women repeating is used again for the second theme of the piece, and then once again at the end of the piece. The end of the piece, however, has the women adding harmonies while the men sing the melody. The development section, starting in m. 27, introduces new ideas with melismatic phrases. Melismas are present throughout the piece but mm. 40-43 utilize the technique of melismatic phrasing in each line. "Starting in m. 37, the piece reaches its climax and an eruption of melismas occur."⁵⁷

The melody is not consistently present in any specific vocal part. It is passed from voice part to voice part throughout the piece. *Sure On This Shining Night* also incorporates several sections of unison singing.

⁵⁷ K-state.edu, "Sure On This Shining Night, No.3 from Nocturnes: Teaching Guide," Kansas State University, Accessed November 20, 2013, http://www.k-state.edu/musiceducation/teachingunits/Sure_On_This_Shining_Night/SureOnThisShiningNight.pdf.

Text

The text of this piece was written by James Agee (1909-1955). The poem is from a book entitled "Permit Me Voyage" which was published in 1934 by the Yale University Press.

Sure on this shining night
Of star-made shadows round,
Kindness must watch for me
This side the ground.

The late year lies down the north.
All is healed, all is health.
High summer holds the earth.
Hearts all whole.

Sure on this shining night
I weep for wonder
Wand'ring far alone
Of shadows on the starts

O magnum mysterium

Morten Lauridsen (b. 1943)

SATB chorus (with divisions) *a cappella* (6:30)

Peer Music, Inc.

Composer

Morten Lauridsen was born in Washington State, and studied at Whitman College and the University of Southern California and Whitman College during the 1970's. He studied composition with Harold Owen, Halsey Stevens, Ingolf Dahl and Robert Linn. The National Endowment recognized him as one of American's most prolific composers and the "American Choral Master" for the Arts in 2006. To this day, his compositions are finding unprecedented popularity throughout the United States and the United Kingdom.

Lauridsen's compositions capture audiences with suspensions, tender attention to text and the use of "added note chords".⁵⁸ His compositions are known for utilizing musical textures from Renaissance techniques and word painting. "Lauridsen created a transcendent mysticism with his shimmering, serene, and fluid writing".⁵⁹ Currently, Morten Lauridsen is the professor of music at the University of Southern California. Some of his works include: *Lux Aeterna* (a song cycle), *O Magnum mysterium*, *Dirait-on*, *Mid-Winter Songs*, and *Madirgali: Six "Firesongs" on "Italian Renaissance Poems"*.

⁵⁸ Frank Abrahams, Heather J. Buchanan, Matthew Mehaffey, and Jerry Blackstone, "The Last Words of David." *Teaching Music through Performance in Choir* Vol. 1, Chicago: GIA Publications, 2005, 235.

⁵⁹ James G. Smith et al. "Choral music," *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/A2218820> (accessed January 30, 2014).

Composition and Genre

O magnum mysterium is a Latin motet. The motet, by definition, is a Latin religious choral composition. It can also be used as a secular composition or a composition for soloist(s) with an instrumental accompaniment in any language. It began during the early thirteenth century and was used as an “application of a new text to older music”, specifically to the sections of *organum*.⁶⁰ Many composers during the Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque eras composed motets including: Orlando di Lasso, Josquin des Prez, Tomás Luis de Victoria, Jean-Baptiste Lully and Johann Sebastian Bach. Morten Lauridsen’s setting of *O magnum mysterium* uses a biblical text and influences from both Gregorian chant and modern music. Lauridsen is known for his use of Renaissance techniques and neoclassic (eighteenth century arts movement) ideas.

Historical Perspective

In 1994 the director of the Los Angeles Master Choral, Paul Salamunovich, commissioned the piece *O magnum mysterium*. Morten Lauridsen considers Salamunovich a “great practitioner of Gregorian chant”.⁶¹ First performed at the Master Chorale Dorothy Chandler Pavilion Concert, it is now one of his most purchased and performed compositions.

The text expresses the story of the birth of Jesus Christ, in a manger, in front of lowly animals. It is classified as a Latin motet and uses a wide range of compositional techniques that represent characteristics of the Renaissance era.

⁶⁰ Britannica.com, “Motet,” Encyclopedia Britannica, Last modified 2014, Accessed March 2, 2014, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/393896/motet>.

⁶¹ Morten Lauridsen. Interview by Bruce Duffie: Chicago, IL, March 1999.

This piece can be used during the worship responsorial following the fourth evening lesson of Matins for Christmas Day. Matins is the seventh part of the Roman Catholic canonical hours (public prayer time). It is the longest of the seven and is primarily used during night hours.

Technical Considerations

O magnum mysterium is a piece that requires great attention to phrasing, energy, and intonation. This setting, like most, contains long lines of music, which can present a challenge to inexperienced singers. Lauridsen composed the opening portion with a *piano* dynamic level. The vowel used with this dynamic level can become problematic when sustaining the pitches. This problem can be fixed by having the singers reiterate the vowel on the second eighth note subdivision. This should be executed gently so the reiteration goes unnoticed by the audience. This method will cause the sound to maintain energy so the ensemble stays in tune.⁶²

With wide ranges, this piece can have the potential to be vocally challenging, specifically in m. 13 with the sopranos singing a low D. When singing this pitch, the sopranos could have clashing intonations. To solve this problem, the conductor should encourage this section to round their lips around the vowel. This will assist in a more in-tune sound for the sopranos in their lower register. Also, with the lack of the root in the bass line, intonation could suffer. Instead, singers should listen for the root in both the alto and tenor parts. Utilizing solfege during rehearsal will improve the singers' intonation by recognizing the root of the chord.

⁶² Jerry Blackstone, Keather J. Buchanan, Janey Galvan, Ann Howard Jones, James Jordan, and Libby Larsen, *Teaching Music Through Performance in Choir* Vol. 2, Chicago: GIA Publications, 2007, 572.

Stylistic Considerations

The declamation (the proper annunciation of words) of the text is very important in *O magnum mysterium*. The stressing of text is important in all languages and for all vocal pieces. Lauridsen took careful consideration setting the text with elongated, stressed syllables. This is seen in the word “mysterium” where Lauridsen lengthens the vowel “te”. Lauridsen made the tempo markings very specific and therefore should be precisely maintained. Along with the tempo markings, all other musical markings should be given the same precision. All of these markings work together to give the piece nuances and outline the structure of the piece.⁶³

Lauridsen frequently used dissonance in this composition. The dissonance could present a challenge to singers who are not comfortable with holding their exact pitch. The singers must be trained to sustain their exact pitch while having the knowledge of where the dissonance is occurring. The use of a straighter tone will also help the singers to have a more locked tone and an overall brilliant sounding chord.

⁶³ Ibid., 573.

Musical Elements

Morten Lauridsen composed *O magnum mysterium* with influences from both Gregorian chant and modern music. This is represented in the melody where Lauridsen used a similar structure to plainchant, and also includes voice-leading patterns which is more often seen in modern music. He also included Ionian modes (major), challenging leaps, and a mixture of homophonic and polyphonic textures. The first use of Gregorian chant can be seen in the opening motive of this piece with reciting tones (a repeated musical pitch) in the soprano line. This opening theme is repeated several times throughout the piece.

The melody is passed around from voice to voice throughout the piece. Making the choir aware of the melodic ladder would greatly contribute to a successful performance of *O magnum mysterium*. The best way to make singers aware is with a carefully thought-out rehearsal plan. Isolate musical figures from each part during rehearsal. Isolating these parts will make everyone aware of their importance to the piece and allow the conductor to explain the various aspects of the text.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Morten Lauridsen, *Sure On This Shining Night*, Songs of Peer, Ltd., 2005.

Form and Structure

O magnum mysterium is a Latin motet with an AABA form, which is one of Lauridsen's favorite forms to use. Each of these sections are split into two smaller sections "a and b" except for the B section which is made up of just a single section of its own. The first A section occurs during mm. 1-18. This section invites the listeners in with a beautiful entrance that evokes a time of wonder and brilliance through the sound and paints the text of "O magnum mysterium" (O great mystery). A1 occurs from m. 18 through m. 37. The B section picks up at m. 38 and continues through m. 45. This section is different in several ways. The biggest difference I noticed was the use of dynamics as it sounded more like a prayer, while the A sections sounded like moments of praise. A2 is where the climax of the piece is heard and in mm. 46-62. The piece ends with a *coda* (tail or end) at the end using fragments of both the "a and b" section. The *coda* occurs from mm. 63-72. The sopranos have a descant part for a short time during this section of the piece. *O magnum mysterium* is such a powerful piece of music that if it is performed correctly, each part will speak beautifully to the audience and touch each one of the singers in the process.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Ibid., 574.

Text and Translation

O mágnum mystérium,
O great mystery,

Et admirabile sacramentum,
and wondrous sacrament,

ut animália vidérent Dóminum nátum,
that animals should see Lord born,

jacéntem in praesépio!
lying in manger!

Beáta Vírgo, cújus víscera meruérunt
Blessed Virgin, whose womb was worthy

portáre Dóminum Chrístum. Allelúia!
to bear Lord Christ. Alleluia!⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Ron Jeffers, *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire, Volume I: Sacred Latin Texts*, Corvallis, Oregon: Earthsongs, 1988, 175.

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