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INCORPORATING ACTIVISM INTO CONTEMPORARY MUSIC: AN ANALYSIS OF A COMPOSITION PORTFOLIO

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INCORPORATING ACTIVISM INTO CONTEMPORARY MUSIC:
AN ANALYSIS OF A COMPOSITION PORTFOLIO

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Music in the
College of Fine Arts
at the University of Kentucky

By

Mary Simmons Walsh

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Timothy Moyers, Professor of Music Theory and Composition

Lexington, Kentucky

2023

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

INCORPORATING ACTIVISM INTO CONTEMPORARY MUSIC: AN ANALYSIS OF A COMPOSITION PORTFOLIO

An original music composition portfolio featuring *White Coral*, a composition for wind ensemble and tape, *Cataclysm*, a composition for bass trombone, tuba, and tape, *Protest*, a composition for chamber ensemble with text by Ella Wheeler Wilcox, *Mother of Men*, a composition for chamber ensemble with text by Ida Couch Hazlett, *The Blue Hour* a composition for wind quintet, and *Jerusalem* a composition for a cappella voices.

KEYWORDS: music composition, electro-acoustic, chamber music, wind ensemble, choir, activism.

Mary Simmons Walsh

04/20/2023

Date

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CataclysmScore	[PDF 719 KB]
JerusalemRecording.....	[MP4 305,244]
JerusalemScore	[PDF 116 KB]
MotherofMenRecording	[WAV 117,977 KB]
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ProtestRecording	[WAV 78,276 KB]
ProtestScore	[PDF 204 KB]
TheBlueHourRecording.....	[WAV 96,558 KB]
TheBlueHourScore	[PDF 133 KB]
WhiteCoralRecording	[MP4 787,254 KB]
WhiteCoralScore.....	[PDF 4,565 KB]

CHAPTER 1. MY PHILOSOPHY OF COMPOSITION

“One of the greatest human needs is the need to be SEEN, not for who we pretend to be, but for who we truly are underneath it all.”- Luminita Saviuc ¹

I write music as a means of self-expression. Throughout my life, I have generally found it very difficult to express myself adequately through words. From a young age, composing music has always been an alternative outlet for the expression of my emotions and thoughts. Every person desires to be seen and understood as they truly are; it is part of being human. Everyone desires others to understand the authentic version of themselves. Human beings have found endless ways to be "seen." Artistic expression is just another way of expressing and fulfilling this need. In my life, I have been drawn to various art forms, such as music, visual arts, and theatre. In each of these endeavors, I search for ways to express myself and be "seen." Through music and other artistic expressions, I am finding ways to both be "seen" and to "see" myself. Music composition requires you to spend a lot of time with yourself, exploring your mind's creative expression and expanding on your self-knowledge. Sometimes I feel like I have a protective shell up around me during my daily life, and with each piece I compose, it is like I am pulling back a layer of my shell and revealing more of my "authentic self." The beautiful thing about composition is that you get to share part of the authentic version of yourself with other musicians, and in turn, when they play your music, they get to add a layer of themselves to your piece.

¹ Luminita Saviuc, "The Strong Need to Be Seen and Why It Matters," Purpose Fairy <https://www.purposefairy.com/90663/the-need-to-be-seen/>

As a twenty-first-century composer inspired by social justice movements, I am compelled to compose music that calls for social and political change. The climate crisis, labor movement, and women's rights movement have energized me to compose while studying music composition at the University of Kentucky. In my portfolio, *Protest*, explores issues related to the labor movement and the abuse of capitalism, *Mother of Men* speaks to how society has treated women throughout history, *White Coral* mourns the loss of our coral reefs caused by climate change, *Cataclysm* shows the human race's dependence on the earth, and *The Blue Hour* is about new beginnings and hope.

It is more fulfilling to compose about topics greater than myself. Music composition can become such an isolating and lonely endeavor; devoting so much time to writing music requires a great deal of sacrifice in one's personal life. Which leaves one with the question, why compose? Why spend your time writing music? The benefits must outweigh the sacrifices, or it does not work. A composer's purpose must be greater than the cost. As a person living in the 21st century, I do not see a more important topic than climate change and our environment. Many of the modern issues that we face in our society stem from or are related to the climate crisis. I want to do my part in supporting these movements. However, I am not a scientist who can discover and invent solutions to help us fight climate change, and I am not a politician who can invoke legal change. I am a composer who can bring the issues to the forefront through creative expression in sound.

In an age filled with climate change deniers, skeptics, and distracted individuals, presenting the scientific facts and proof of climate change is extremely important. However, these individuals have already been given the facts and detailed explanations of

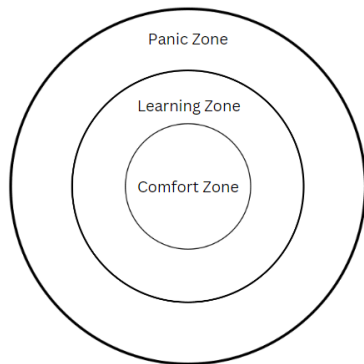
humanity's destiny if we refuse to act. But for various reasons, many still refuse to act. So what is the next course of action? There is a reason why the saying "when words fail, music speaks" is so popular. In my experience of composing music, this saying has proven to be accurate as I have written music to express my thoughts and feelings in a way that I could not have depicted in words. I hope that my music might speak to people and that I might be understood and "seen" through my music or that someone else might feel "seen" as well.

CHAPTER 2. WHITE CORAL

One of the pieces in my portfolio, *White Coral*, incorporates multiple compositional techniques which I have studied at the University of Kentucky. Through writing *White Coral*, I have expanded my compositional toolkit to incorporate a wider variety of sounds and techniques that have enabled me to experience a significant amount of growth as a composer and artist.

The figure (below) is a well-known model on how to experience "growth" or "learning" and is known as "The Learning Zone Model." Conceived by psychologist Lev Vygotsky and recently popularized by educator Tom Senninger, this model shows how one must go outside their comfort zone to learn. However, one must be careful not to venture too far outside of their comfort zone or panic will set in.²

Figure 1: The Learning Zone Model: Moments of Freedom³



² Mind Tools Content Team, "The Learning Zone Model," MindTools. <https://www.mindtools.com/a0bop9z/the-learning-zone-model>.

³ Moments of Freedom, "Learning Zone Model," <https://www.momentsoffreedom.org/learning-zone-model>.

The center circle represents the experiences and situations that are in one's comfort zone.⁴ While composing *White Coral*, my comfort zone was the initial stage of writing compositional sketches on two grand staves, commonly referred to as short score. I felt quite at ease during this stage of the process as it was similar to projects I had previously undertaken.

The middle circle in the "Learning Zone Model" represents when experiences are outside of your comfort zone.⁵ Orchestrating the piece for wind ensemble was outside of my comfort zone. Besides a few orchestration assignments, I had never orchestrated a piece for wind ensemble. Through this stage, I learned a considerable amount about how the wind ensemble functions and how to write for it appropriately. I arranged for a reading of *White Coral* from the University of Kentucky Concert Band to aid in this process. The recording of their sight reading provided valuable feedback on what orchestration and compositional techniques worked for a real ensemble and what techniques did not translate as well from Sibelius's MIDI mock-up.

One is in the outer circle of the "Learning Zone Model" when they are experiencing situations that are completely outside of their wheelhouse and are overwhelmed with panic.⁶ At the beginning of the fall semester of 2022, I found a way to move myself out of my comfort zone. I signed up for electro-acoustic lessons with Dr. Timothy Moyers. At times, I found myself in the panic area of the third circle; however, I eventually found ways to relate and incorporate the electro-acoustic techniques of what I was learning in with my instrumental writing.

⁴ Moments of Freedom, "Learning Zone Model"

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

The more significant lesson from this model is that the more things you do outside of the center circle, the larger your center circle will grow. Likewise, if you do not put yourself outside of the center circle that many times, your center circle will shrink.⁷ To grow as an artist, you must continually push yourself out of your comfort zone. As a composer and as a person, I am always looking for ways to push myself out of the center circle.

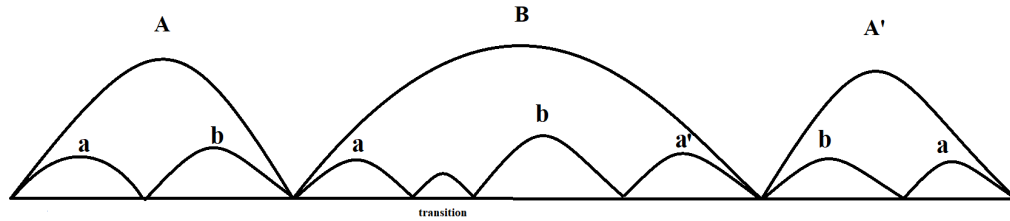
In the spring of 2021, I accompanied my husband's family to visit the Florida Keys. On one of the days of the trip we took an excursion to Dry Tortugas National Park. Before this trip, I had no experience with coral reefs nor knew of the human-inflicted damage being caused. I was in complete ignorant bliss of the whole situation. One of the activities at Dry Tortugas is snorkeling. In hindsight, I debate the ethics of participating in this event. Nevertheless, I was stunned by the beauty of the coral but also interested in why some of the coral was bleached white. I started researching online, and the results were quite horrendous. Coral has a symbiotic relationship with algae. Through this relationship, the algae gain protection, the coral gains its color, and both organisms are rewarded with nutrients. Coral bleaching occurs when coral reefs lose their symbiotic relationship with algae. A multitude of human intrusions causes the loss of this symbiotic relationship, including climate change, water pollution, commercial fishing, and tourism; humans are not at a loss for ways to damage this ecosystem.⁸

⁷ Moments of Freedom, "Learning Zone Model"

⁸ Zandonella, Catherine. "When Corals Met Algae: Symbiotic Relationship Crucial to Reef Survival Dates to the Triassic," Princeton University, November 2, 2016. <https://www.princeton.edu/news/2016/11/02/when-corals-met-algae-symbiotic-relationship-crucial-reef-survival-dates-triassic>.

Figure 2: Mary Simmons Walsh, *White Coral*, Musical Form Diagram

"White Coral" Form



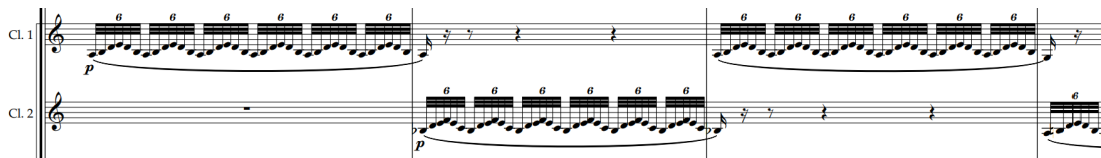
I typically do not arbitrarily choose a musical form and then force my music into it. Instead, I prefer to let the story of the piece dictate the musical form. The form of *White Coral* organically arose throughout the compositional process as the story also developed.

The macro form of this piece is a generic ABA' layout. The beginning of the A section aims to convey a healthy coral reef habitat that is healthy and full of life. The following B section shows the destruction of the coral reefs caused by bleaching that is currently occurring in the coral reefs. Lastly, the A material, yet altered, returns to convey that we can turn the environmental impact around. The A' section is about what could be if we change our course.

Each of these larger sections has a more diminutive form within it at a micro level. Within the larger A section, a smaller ab form is contained. The a section is purely electro-acoustic and is built upon sampling different recordings of crashing waves, seagulls, sonar, and whale songs. The b section occurs when the instruments enter as individual instruments begin playing in a soloistic manner and then become part of the sustaining sound when they finish their melodic lines. Thirty-second note patterns start to appear and are passed throughout the ensemble to mimic the waves of the ocean. The

wave-like pattern begins as a small murmuring in the background, while the instruments with slower-moving lines are in the foreground; however, as the section progresses, the focus shifts as the waves increase in intensity. Once the ensemble reaches measure 19, the waves should be at the highest point, as the musicians are free to play their pattern in various rhythms and tempos. This b section continues to grow and then fades at measure 19 to mirror the way in which a wave crashes onto the shore, and then water is calmly pulled back to sea.

Figure 3: Mary Simmons Walsh, *White Coral*, mm 6-9



The larger B section contains a micro-level form of aba. After the caesura that marks the end of the larger A section, the piece momentarily shifts from a section that represents a lively and healthy coral reef to a hollow and empty section meant to show the dying coral reefs. After the A section, all the instruments cease to play, and there is a moment of a hollow-sounding drone. This a section is based on a simple harmonic progression that is repeated by the clarinets (Figure 4). For me, this accompaniment in the clarinets invokes an image of the rigid skeletons of the coral. At the beginning of the piece, I imagine the point of view of someone who is snorkeling; they see a coral reef that is beautiful and healthy, but as they keep swimming, they get to a point where the coral is dead, and therefore, the ecosystem that was with the coral reefs is gone.

Figure 4: Mary Simmons Walsh, *White Coral*, Harmonic Progression



This progression also incorporates modal writing. One could interpret this progression modally in g aeolian. The absence of a V to I harmonic motion gives this progression a static quality and contributes to the hollow and empty effect I am trying to achieve to display the dying coral.

The b section starts to incorporate harmonies that have a distant relationship to the home key of g minor. The relationship between these harmonies is shown through a Neo-Riemannian analysis below (Figure 5). Even though this section contains only major and minor triads, there is still tension being introduced by the relationship between these harmonies due to the chords existing outside the key of g minor. In this section, I envision the human destruction of the coral reefs as the tension continues growing until we reach measure 89, where the intensity drops and the "a" material returns.

Figure 5: Mary Simmons Walsh, *White Coral*, Neo-Riemannian Analysis, mm 131-134



Finally, the A' section's form is the retrograde of the original A section. The b material returns but is varied and grows in intensity much quicker through the ascending melodic

line seen in measures 131 to 134. This section is an emotional recall of the coral reefs before humans interfered and caused damage to occur. For me, this part of the music says there is hope to rebuild and hope for the coral reefs to experience new growth. The inspiration behind this part of the piece has to do with the current report of positive change being accomplished in coral recovery. The Austrian Institute of Marine Science reported in 2022 that the Great Barrier Reef saw significant signs of recovery.⁹ However, they did mention that the reefs are still extremely susceptible to coral bleaching due to the rise in temperatures caused by global warming. Thus, the return of the florid or lively section does not happen for long, and we quickly return to the hollow chord progression from the B section.

After I wrote the instrumental score for *White Coral*, I was skeptical that I had captured the programmatic story that I was trying to tell. Since the piece was heavily programmatic and about such an important issue, it was essential that the audience's perception of the piece lined up with what I was trying to convey. I started to assemble a tape portion of the composition by sampling sounds of the ocean, underwater sounds, seagulls, whale songs, sonar sounds, and various ambient drones. By composing the electro-acoustic aspect of this piece, I was able to become more specific and detailed in my writing about the images and story I wanted to tell. Although I tried to add similar effects to mimic the ocean in my instrumental writing, it does not equate to hearing

⁹ Ayana Archie, "Coral Levels in Some Parts of the Great Barrier Reef Are at the Highest in 36 Years," NPR, August 4, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/08/04/1115539492/coral-great-barrier-reef-australia#:~:text=Coral%20in%20the%20Great%20Barrier%20Reef%20is%20resilient%2C,frequent%20and%20long-lasting%20heatwaves%2C%20cyclones%20and%20crown-of-thorns%20starfish.>

recordings of the real thing. By using very specific sounds that most people have heard, I can reference more personal experiences with the listener. The overall listening experience becomes more realistic and harder to remove oneself from.

When adding in the tape aspect of the piece, I had to be careful not to overpower the wind ensemble. I wanted the wind ensemble to lead the piece while the tape provides textural ambiance. I had to be careful not to make the tape part too busy for fear of drawing attention away from the instrumental part, but I also had to make the tape visible enough in the mix so that it was not lost. There was a fine line between what was too much and what was not enough. I also had to choose when to include the wave sounds as opposed to the underwater sounds. I included the wave sound in the larger A sections to show a healthy coral reef, and I included the underwater sounds in the B section to get a more hollow effect to symbolize the dying coral.

I wanted to have a good portion of time at the beginning of the piece devoted to the electro-acoustic tape portion before the instruments enter. In this opening section, I build the sonic world of the piece in the same way that a science fiction or fantasy writer focuses on world-building as a separate focus from their narrative or story. The piece begins with a low drone with the sound of waves layered on top before a higher drone enters. I selected this collection of sounds to give a mysterious and ominous tone. To vary the texture, I incorporated sounds of wind chimes, sonar, and whale songs. The whale songs were added to give another level of meaning because whales naturally fight climate change by accumulating a substantial amount of CO₂ into their bodies during their lifetime. As whales die, their bodies sink to the bottom of the ocean, along with

about 33 tons of CO₂.¹⁰ The sonar sounds were particularly useful due to the variety of pitches that I found them in. However, the sonar sounds lacked the internal variance in pitch that the whale songs had. Both of these sounds also adapt to audio stretching and the addition of reverb quite nicely.

I assembled the tape to aid the instrumental portion of *White Coral*, but I still wanted to interweave the instrumental aspect of the piece with the electronic element to create a unified composition. I drew inspiration from my instrumental writing when assembling the tape to achieve this unity. The crashing of the waves corresponds to the repeated melodic patterns in the woodwinds. The sounds of whale songs and sonar carry over the ensemble in the same way a piccolo in the right register carries over a large ensemble. The sounds of rain not only correspond to the sound of the ocean drum but also add tension to the texture. My instrumental writing inspired by the use of metallic sounds in the vibraphone. In the tape portion, I used the sounds of wind chimes to reference when the mark tree is played. Lastly, the use of ethereal drones is similar to the sustaining lines of the instrumental parts of the first section.

Hildegard Westerkamp's composition *Beneath the Forest Floor* was one of my first introductions to building a soundscape through the collection, reordering, and editing of sounds. The philosophy behind soundscape composition is very appealing to my conservationist aspirations in *White Coral*. Although *White Coral* is quite different from Hildegard Westerkamp's composition *Beneath the Forest Floor*, I was inspired by how she rearranged and edited sounds from nature to create an interesting and engaging

¹⁰ Sophie Yeo, "How Whales Help Cool The Earth," BBC Future, February 24, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20210119-why-saving-whales-can-help-fight-climate-change>.

environment.¹¹ One of the pillars of soundscape composition is the idea that the used sounds should maintain a clear degree of recognizability. The recognizability of the sounds is key to invoking and recalling associations to the sounds that listeners may have. Composer Barry Truax believes that with vivid sound materials, program notes and explanations of a piece are not needed to understand what the piece is “about.”¹² Since *White Coral* is very programmatic, it was very important that the sounds maintain their recognizability in order to convey the meaning of the piece. The use of recognizable sounds allows me to be more descriptive as a composer and to invoke a clearer image in the minds of listeners that is informed by the aural memories of their daily experiences.

As an extension of the soundscape composition philosophy, I decided to add a video portion of the piece that accompanies the recognizable sounds that are heard in the tape. I asked my brother to create a video that presented realistic images of the damage caused by bleaching in the coral reefs. I wanted the video to have minimal effects or altering done to the footage. Altering the footage included in the video would have distracted from the piece's message.

¹¹ Hildegard Westerkamp, “Beneath the Forest Floor,” <https://www.hildegardwesterkamp.ca/sound/comp/2/ForestFloor/>.

¹² Michael Clarke, Dufeu Frédéric, and Peter Manning, “Hildegard Westerkamp: Beneath the Forest Floor.” *Inside Computer Music*. Oxford University Press, 2020, 133.

CHAPTER 3: *CATACLYSM*

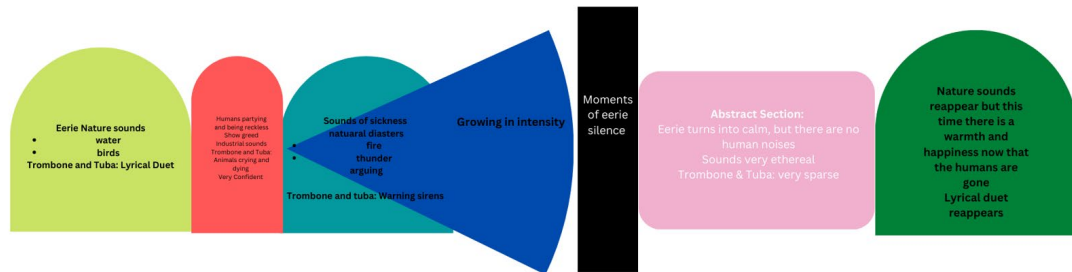
Cataclysm is a duet for bass trombone and tuba with tape. The inspiration for this piece is the climate change clock in Manhattan, New York, that estimates how much time humanity has until global warming reaches 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels. Many scientists have found that severe climate change will be unleashed once the 1.5 °C threshold is reached. This piece imagines what it might be like to reach that tipping point and the aftermath. Through *Cataclysm*, we find that humans were never damaging only the earth but also destroying their chances of survival. New life will reemerge, and the planet may well be better off without the human race.¹³

In planning *Cataclysm*, I employed a technique that was new to me. Composer Jenni Brandon introduced me to this technique during her visit to the University of Kentucky School of Music in the fall of 2022. She showed me how she begins to plan her pieces by drawing a graphic representation of the overall shape. I employed this technique when I was in the conceptual stage of writing *Cataclysm*. I created a graphic display of the form of the piece before I started writing. This technique was extremely valuable. Some of my instrumental pieces in the past lacked direction because I did not have a clear idea of where I was going. By planning the piece in this way, I avoided aimlessly wandering in my writing. Although I did not end up following my plan exactly,

¹³ Colin Moynihan, “A New York Clock That Told Time Now Tells The Time Remaining,” The New York Times, September 20, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/20/arts/design/climate-clock-metronome-nyc.html>.

the larger structure remained intact. This graphic planning also helped me collect sounds that I used in the tape portion.

Figure 6: Mary Simmons Walsh, *Cataclysm*, Graphic Planning



I composed *Cataclysm* by assembling the electro-acoustic portion of the first section, and then I began to write the bass trombone and tuba duet over the tape. Composing this piece from beginning to end was a practical approach. I typically find solo works and duets to be more challenging to write than pieces for larger forces or chamber works. The challenging part of writing solos or duets is the reduced number of options available to give the piece contrast so that a listener’s interest is held throughout. A solo or duet medium places limitations on your writing; paradoxically, these limitations allow for more creative growth. In this case, putting instrumentation limitations on *Cataclysm* allowed me to develop a creative solution. Throughout the piece, the collection and sampling of sounds became the accompaniment, and writing the piece became no different than writing a brass duet with piano accompaniment.

Cataclysm contains an aleatoric section where the players are free to play specific “cells” in their chosen order. This idea was inspired by the minimalist writing of Terry Riley in *In C* and *Sunrise of the Planetary Dream Collector*. In these compositions, the musicians are given more choice in what order to play the cells or how many times to

play the cells. ¹⁴This compositional technique is new to me and is something I would like to explore. In the past, many of my compositions have been precisely notated and do not allow for any instances of free choice amongst the musicians who play my music. By incorporating moments of free choice through the aleatoric section, my hope is to make a more autonomous experience for the musicians resulting in increasing the music's ability to connect with them. As the composer, I find using these cells to be quite interesting because each performance of *Cataclysm* will be different. As a new musician performs the piece, it will evolve into something new instead of being fixed in a continuum.

The reordering of certain melodic ideas is also similar to how I assembled the tape portion of the piece. I collected various sounds and reordered them, edited, and layered them into the tape portion. The players are technically doing the same process in the aleatoric portion as they play the cells in various orders, edit the tempo and rhythm, and play multiple cells against each other in a duet.

Since I composed the tape and the instrumental part simultaneously, the tape largely informed my instrumental writing as opposed to *White Coral*, where the tape was informed by the instrumental portion. *Cataclysm* contains a drone on G^b throughout the beginning part of the piece. This largely impacted my tonal map for the piece. At the beginning of the piece, the bass trombone and tuba emerge in the key of e minor with an emphasis on the mediant G^b.

¹⁴ Ghostly International, "Terry Riley: In C," <https://ghostly.com/products/terry-riley-in-c>.

Figure 7: Mary Simmons Walsh, *Cataclysm*, mm 1-5

As the piece continues, a loop is used to create a cacophony which eventually ends in a sudden escarpment of sound. In the aleatoric section, the instruments reemerge and seem to be searching for a tonal center; however, they cannot seem to achieve one.

Figure 8: Mary Simmons Walsh, *Cataclysm*, mm 52-55

4

5 3:12

Both players. Play any of the cells in any order, up to three times each. Cells may be omitted. Rhythm, tempo, and dynamics can vary. Cells may be played solo, or two different cells may overlap.

A cataclysm is defined as “an event that brings great change.”¹⁵ So the return of the beginning material, which is meant to represent the healing of the earth, cannot be exactly the same as the beginning. Eventually, we hear a return of the G^b drone, and the tuba and bass trombone reemerge in C major with brief flashbacks to e minor. The importance of G^b is further shown in how the tuba ends the piece on G^b while the bass trombone ends on D^b, implying a dominant harmony in C major.

¹⁵ Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, “cataclysm,” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cataclysm>.

Figure 9: Mary Simmons Walsh *Cataclysm*, mm 90-94

90 *Let tape play till the end.*

ppp

ppp

CHAPTER 4: *MOTHER OF MEN & PROTEST*

Mother of Men:

I was first inspired to write *Mother of Men* in June 2022 when the Supreme Court overturned *Roe vs. Wade*. The overturning of *Roe vs. Wade* is one of those historical events in which one remembers exactly what they are doing and where one was when it happened. For me, it was a surreal experience to know that nine people I had never met before could make such a monumental decision that could affect so many things about my life. For multiple reasons, this decision is life-threatening for many women. The overruling left me feeling powerless and silenced. I turned to composition as a tool to try and work through some of these complicated emotions. Through a significant amount of research, I found a text that spoke to what I was feeling. The poem *Mother of Men* by Ida Crouch Hazlett proclaims that even though women have given so much to our society, our society continues to tear women down.¹⁶

After the overturning of *Roe vs. Wade*, it was extremely easy for me to lose hope for the world and fear for the future of women's rights in America. I find discomfort and comfort in reading poetry like Ida Hazlett's. It is discomfoting that this inequity has been going on for so long, but it is comforting to know that I am not alone in feeling the same anger and discontent.

Mother of Men
By Ida Crouch Hazlett

She has mothered her child in the jungles wild,

¹⁶ Janet Raye, "Hellraisers Journal: From The Ohio Socialist: A Poem for the 'Mothers of Men' by Ida Crouch Hazlett.," *Mother Jones*, December 10, 2018. <https://weneverforget.org/hellraisers-journal-from-the-ohio-socialist-a-poem-for-the-mothers-of-men-by-ida-crouch-hazlett/>.

Through many a long gone age;
She has mourned her dead by the sunset red,
Where the storms of battle rage.
She has borne the burdens of every clime,
And borne its men as well.
And is this the reply to her human cry:
Down, down to the harlot's hell?

She has lighted the fire on every hearth;
She fashioned the vessels rude;
She turned the earth in its first gray birth,
And gave to the nations food.
She made the tools and she formed the rules
To clothe the tribes that dwell.
And is this the reply to her mothering cry:
Down, down to the factory hell?

They chained her like beasts to labor's wheel;
They snatched her babes from her quivering breast,
By court and law and page.
But she comes as the moon walks over the sea—
In the glory of years to be;
To bless the race with her joyous face,
And woman shall yet be free.¹⁷

When setting poetry to music, I find myself always concerned about being true to the poet's intent. However, just like it is impossible to know a composer's intent behind a piece unless they explicitly state it, a composer cannot know the intent of a poet's poetry. Composer Ned Rorem writes, “[s]ong is a reincarnation of a poem which was destroyed in order to live again in music.”¹⁸ My composition *Mother of Men* is not just a musical representation of Ida Crouch Hazlett's poem; it is a musical work where I am allowed to express my thoughts and interpretations.

¹⁷ Janet Raye, “Hellraisers Journal: From The Ohio Socialist: A Poem for the ‘Mothers of Men’ by Ida Crouch Hazlett.”

¹⁸ Ned Rorem, “Poetry of Music,” New York: Limelight, *A Ned Rorem Reader*, 111.

I agree with Rorem in the sentiment that the poetry should not constrain the music, but I do believe that poetry can guide the composer. The form of this piece was derived from the form of the poem. The lines “[d]own, down, to the harlot’s hell?” and “[d]own, down, to the factory hell?” are very similar in structure but convey different meanings. My first instinct was to set the lines exactly the same, but upon reconsideration, I found they needed to be set differently. "Down, down, to the harlot's hell?" is set in a very aggressive manner, and "[d]own, down, to the factory hell?" is set to be more dejected and defeated. Even though the third stanza does not contain a line with the same structure, the emotional intent changes to be more hopeful of what is coming.

Figure 10: Mary Simmons Walsh, *Mother of Men*, string parts, mm. 1-4

The image shows a musical score for string parts from measures 1 to 4. The score is for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major/D minor), and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked 'Lento' with a metronome marking of 60. The music is marked 'p legato'. The Violoncello part includes fingering: I, ii, I, v.

Figure 11: Mary Simmons Walsh, *Mother of Men*, string parts mm.73-76

G

p

p

p

p

Figure 12: Mary Simmons Walsh, *Mother of Men*, vocal parts, mm 110-111

31

rit. mp p mf

be. free.

rit. mp p mf

be. free.

rit. mp p mf

be. free.

rit. mp p mf

be. free.

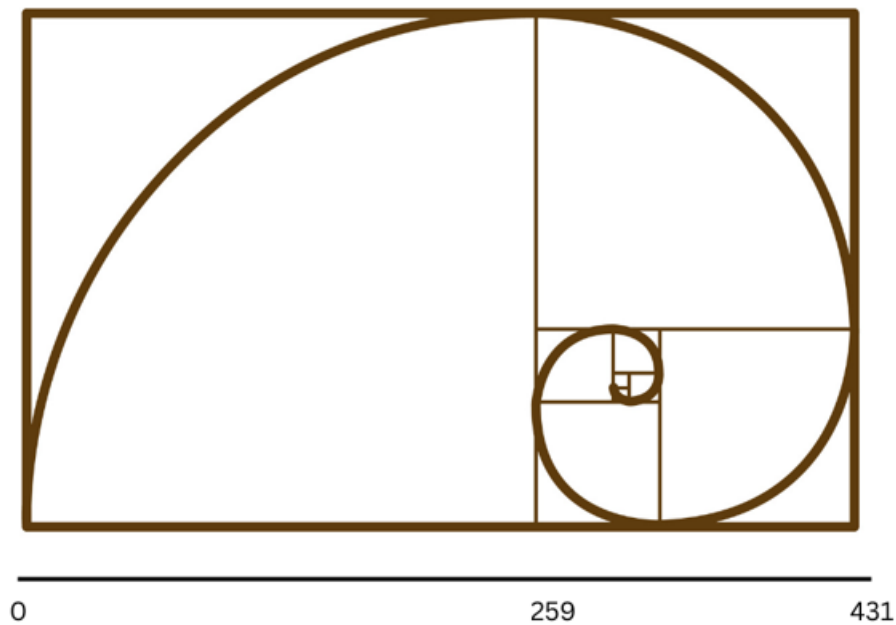
In *Mother of Men*, the journey of the A^b to A^{\sharp} is important. At the beginning of the piece, I introduce a progression in C major. In this progression, A^b is heard in the second chord. Approaching the middle section, we start to see A^{\sharp} predominantly used as the 9th in a g^m9 chord. Emphasis is placed on the pitch A^{\sharp} at rehearsal marker G, with the majority of the ensemble repeating a g^m9 chord and a C7 chord while the cello repeats an A^{\sharp} harmonic (Figure 11). The ending also reinforces the idea of A^{\sharp} as an important pitch. Instead of resolving the soprano line to G^{\sharp} , I chose to leave it unresolved to symbolize the newfound hope for the future (Figure 12). The journey of A^b to A^{\sharp} reflects the shift in mood in the text. The first stanza contains a dejected mood; however, by the end of the poem, the mood shifts to be more confident and hopeful of the future.

Throughout *Mother of Men*, I use two harmonic centers. The harmonic center shifts back and forth between C major with a minor v chord and g minor with a borrowed IV chord. Rehearsal marking G shows one of the various places where this larger macro harmonic idea is found in the piece at a micro level.

I view rehearsal marking G with the text "down, down, to the factory's hell?" as a pivotal moment of the piece, so I chose to emphasize it in terms of its location in the piece. In mathematics, the golden ratio, which is also known as the golden section, is the irrational number $(1 + \sqrt{5})/2$, often denoted by the Greek letter ϕ or Phi. This ratio is commonly found in nature, visual art, music, and other places. The piece is approximately 431 seconds long, with rehearsal marker G happening at 259 seconds.

When you divide these two numbers, you get 1.664092664092664, which is fairly close to Phi $\Phi = 1.618033988749895...$ ¹⁹

Figure 13: Freepik, Fibonacci Sequence Mathematics Fibonacci Numbers



As a vocalist, composing for voice is one of my strong suits. I fell in love with composing for voices when I was an undergraduate student at Hollins University and had the pleasure of being a member of the Talmadge Singers, a small treble choir. My choral writing is inspired by many of the works that I performed while attending Hollins University. I especially find inspiration in choral works that empower women, such as

¹⁹ Mario Livio, "Prelude To A Number," *The Golden Ratio: The Story of Phi, The World's Most Astonishing Number*, 1–11.

Wild Embers by Melissa Dunphy, *Moon Goddess* by Joycelyn Hagen, and *Truth* by Andrea Ramsey.

Protest

Another text I relate to and felt inspired to set to music was the poem *Protest* by Ella Wheeler Wilcox. I fell in love with the poem's content, but I worried about its ability to be translated into music. I was unsure about how to set the long and dense lines of this poem. I did not want to set the poem in its entirety. Choosing what to cut and what to leave in required careful consideration. Even though I was going to make cuts to the poem, the poem still needed to make sense. The process reminded me of when an actor makes cuts to a monologue for an audition with limited time to perform. The actor wants to save the most emotionally impactful parts of the monologue while omitting unnecessary material. This is another instance where the poetry must die so the music can live again. Ned Rorem compares the act of setting poetry to breaking the bones of the poetry. I had to break the form of the poetry and piece it back together to make it coexist with the music.²⁰

Protest

By Ella Wheeler Wilcox

To sin by silence, when we should protest,
Makes cowards out of men. The human race
Has climbed on protest. ~~Had no voice been raised
Against injustice, ignorance, and lust,
The inquisition yet would serve the law,
And guillotines decide our least disputes.~~
The few who dare, must speak and speak again
To right the wrongs of many. Speech, thank God,
No vested power in this great day and land

²⁰ Ned Rorem, *A Ned Rorem Reader*, 111.

~~Can gag or throttle. Press and voice may cry
Loud disapproval of existing ills;
May criticise oppression and condemn
The lawlessness of wealth-protecting laws
That let the children and childbearers toil
To purchase ease for idle millionaires.~~

Therefore I do protest against the boast
Of independence in this mighty land.
Call no chain strong, which holds one rusted link.
Call no land free, that holds one fettered slave.
~~Until the manacled slim wrists of babes
Are loosed to toss in childish sport and glee,
Until the mother bears no burden, save
The precious one beneath her heart, until~~
God's soil is rescued from the clutch of greed
And given back to labor, let no man
Call this the land of freedom.²¹

²¹ Ella Wheeler Wilcox, "Protest," *Poems of Problems*, (W. B. Conkey Company, 1914).

Part of what drew me to this text is the opening line of the poem “[t]o sin by silence, when we should protest, makes cowards out of men.”²² Strong first lines and strong last lines are something I look for when searching for poems to set. Because the first and last lines are critical to what sticks with a listener, they need to be especially memorable. The first line expresses how I feel as an artist. I believe that with everything going on in the world, it is the responsibility of every single person to speak out against injustices. In the words of the author Toni Morrison: “This is precisely the time when artists go to work. There is no time for despair, no place for self-pity, no need for silence, no room for fear. We speak, we write, we do language. That is how civilizations heal.”²³

The text of *Protest* also describes what I believe to be the root cause of many societal issues I have written about in my portfolio. This issue is late stage capitalism, where the profits of the elites are more important than the rights of the people and the protection of the environment. Even when people can directly see injustices occurring worldwide, most choose to stay silent. It is easier for some people to stay in the status quo and not "rock the boat" than actively choose to speak up. The drive to continuously speak out against injustices, even when it is difficult to do so, is represented in *Protest* by the two-bar ostinato played by the cello. This two-bar phrase is meant to mimic the persistent chants of a protester in its short and repetitive quality.

²² Ella Wheeler Wilcox, “Protest”

²³ Toni Morrison, “No Place For Self-Pity, No Room For Fear,” *The Nation*, <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/no-place-self-pity-no-room-fear/>.

Figure 14: Mary Simmons Walsh, *Protest*, cello part, mm. 10-11



CHAPTER 5: *THE BLUE HOUR*

The Blue Hour is a composition for woodwind quintet which I composed during the fall semester of 2022. *The Blue Hour* refers to the time right before sunrise and right after sunset when the world wakes up at the beginning of the day and settles back down at night. When the sky changes from night to day or day to night, it has a blue tint to it. This blue tint has inspired people to colloquially refer to this time of the day and night as the blue hour.²⁴ Throughout *The Blue Hour*, themes of new beginnings, growth, and hope are explored.

The programmatic inspiration of the piece informed aspects of the form. Due to the dual meaning of the term "blue hour," I chose to have the opening material reappear to close the piece to give the idea of the cyclical nature of the blue hour.

One of the most challenging aspects of writing this chamber piece was to include interesting soloistic lines. Before writing this piece, many of my quartet and quintet writing included thick polyphonic textures where all the instruments played individual lines. Of course, there is nothing wrong with this approach, and sometimes it is what is needed; however, through writing *The Blue Hour*, I have discovered how contrasting soloistic lines, duets, trios, and tutti sections add variety and strength to my compositions.

Throughout *The Blue Hour*, I implemented two different textural qualities. The first is an organic soloistic quality where the instruments "wake up" as their individual

²⁴ Deborah Byrd, "What Is the Blue Hour?" Earth Sky, <https://earthsky.org/earth/what-is-the-blue-hour/>.

melodic lines grow. Each instrument plays a solo line with rubato and then sustains to create a pad of sound underneath the following emerging solo line (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Mary Simmons Walsh, *The Blue Hour*, mm. 5-7

The image displays a musical score for five staves, likely representing different instruments or voices. The score is in 5/4 time and begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The music is characterized by complex, overlapping melodic lines. The first staff features a series of sixteenth-note runs and a sustained note. The second staff has a long, sustained note followed by a melodic phrase. The third staff shows a melodic line with a long, sustained note. The fourth staff is mostly silent, with a few notes. The fifth staff has a long, sustained note. The score is divided into three measures, with a 5/4 time signature at the beginning and end of each measure.

The second textural quality is based on having various lines of counterpoint woven together but in a strict tempo (Figure 16). Throughout the piece, the textural focus shifts back and forth between these two qualities and at times, merges them together.

Figure 16: Mary Simmons Walsh, *The Blue Hour*, mm. 16-19

4

16

accel.

accel.

accel.

accel.

accel.

While studying composition at the University of Kentucky, I have been trying to figure out ways to write tonally but not rely so much on a dominant to tonic relationship. I have found modal writing an effective method to do so. Rehearsal marker B shows an instance of incorporating the dorian mode by vamping back and forth between *i* and *IV* (Figure 17). Later on in the piece, contrasting material appears in the dorian mode as well (Figure 18).

Figure 17: Mary Simmons Walsh, *The Blue Hour*, mm. 12-15

12 **B** In strict tempo

Figure 18: Mary Simmons Walsh, *The Blue Hour*, mm. 69-73

10 69 **H** ♩ = 60 Lento

As someone who has never played a woodwind instrument, I found learning some of the idiosyncrasies of the instruments to be quite tricky yet valuable. Since I have a background as a vocalist, I approached writing for these instruments in a singable manner. One of my favorite composers for woodwind writing is Herman Beeftink. Although he does not currently have any compositions available for woodwind quintet, his writing for solo, duet, and trio woodwind instruments inspires me to write more for these instruments. In my opinion, in many of his compositions, such as *Spring*²⁵ and *Birds*,²⁶ he writes for woodwinds in a singable style as well.

At first, it may seem as though *The Blue Hour* does not share a similar link to my other activist-influenced compositions. However, when incorporating activism into music, I find it essential not to focus solely on the negative aspects of an issue. Instead, it is important to approach artistic activism as a realist and as an optimist. Hope is an extremely valuable and necessary tool for activism. "To change the world, one must believe that it can be changed."²⁷

²⁵ *Composer Herman Beeftink*, <https://hermanbeeftink.com/collections/spring>.

²⁶ *Composer Herman Beeftink*,. <https://hermanbeeftink.com/products/birds-complete-trio-for-piccolo-flute-and-alto-flute-by-herman-beeftink-score-and-parts-digital-download>.

²⁷ Zhane Yamin, "Optimism Is the Best Way to Live Your Life," *The Michigan Daily*, <https://www.michigandaily.com/opinion/the-indomitable-human-spirit-from-optimism-to-activism/>.

CHAPTER 6: JERUSALEM

Composing the piece *Jerusalem* was different than writing any of my previous compositions due to the amount of research it required. I wrote this piece as a project for the ethnomusicology seminar in the spring of 2022. The class was titled Oral Traditions in Music. I decided to research the religious singing of my grandparents' religious denomination, the Old German Baptist Brethren. The Old German Baptist is an Anabaptist Christian denomination that strictly adheres to the rejection of modern culture and assimilation.

I will never forget the memories I have of attending the Old German Baptist Brethren church services with my grandmother when I was a child. We would sit on a wooden pew together and sing hymns out of my grandmother's hymnbook. The hymnbook contained no written music, yet the congregation confidently sang out melodies of worship. As a child, I was always fascinated with the unique sounds of these hymns. I wondered what incorporating the sounds that I associate with my grandmother and her religion into my music would sound like.

In this research project, I wanted to find out what are the idiomatic practices and techniques of the Old German Baptist Brethren hymn singing style. I wanted to know how I could incorporate and infuse these techniques into my compositional style to create a piece that is not an exact copy of their singing style but rather a piece with influences and references to it.

In researching this topic, revisiting the church my grandmother attended and talking to members that knew her was extremely beneficial. I also studied the hymns by transcribing them into notation to see some common features among them. I noticed that

many people sing in unison at varying octaves. Others fill in harmonies that follow the melody in a planing method. Although there is harmony, there is no contrary motion between parts. Also, the more conservative a church is, the slower the congregation will sing their hymns. The church I visited, Oak Hill, is fairly conservative, so their singing is extremely slow. The tempo was so slow that I had to take a breath after every other word. The hymn tunes that the Old German Baptist Brethren use are common amongst other churches in the United States yet contain a different atmosphere when sung this slow. Notes that would have been sung as non-chord tones or decorative notes in other churches are now heard as separate sonorities due to the tempo of the singing. It is interesting how tempo affects how harmonic progressions are perceived, what notes are primary to a melody, and what notes are decorative or secondary. Figure 19 lists other findings from my research of interviewing Randy Boone, who is a deacon from Oak Hill Church and Samuel Funkhouser, who is the director of the Brethren Heritage Museum. The chart also includes my personal observations from attending a church service.

Figure 19: Mary Simmons Walsh, Findings and Observations Chart

Findings and Observations

Randy Boone	Samuel Funkhouser	Attending a church service	Miscellaneous
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The meter tells you which tune you can pair with which hymn • Method of lining the verse before you sing it • No one knows what hymn the deacon will pick, which deacon will sing the hymn, or which tune he will choose to sing the hymn to. • Hymn singing is common outside of church too. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rarely any hymns that have refrains • No hymns in minor keys • The use of hymnals from other churches is common for singing that is conducted outside of the church • Harmony has been viewed as prideful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sound seems to be carried by the men • Some people are aware of the melody and some people are not • They had to start one hymn over because some started with a tune from a different meter. • Phrase structures is more apparent in some hymns than in others • Some people will sing a drone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In naming a hymn they say the 'fiftieth hymn instead of hymn number fifty'.

28 29

The last hymn I transcribed was the four-hundred-and-fifty-fifth hymn of the Old German Baptist Brethren hymnbook (Figure 20). I was inspired to use this hymn in my composition. Throughout the hymn, there seems to be a macro chord progression of I, IV, I, V7, I IV I V7 I, but on a smaller scale, there is a micro chord progression that is created by the non-chord tones. Due to the extremely slow singing and the absence of metrically stressed notes versus unstressed notes, these chords and tones are presented more equally when compared to the I, IV, or V chords that provide the harmonic anchors of the tune. This hymn contains three simple motivic ideas: the first being a neighbor tone figure, the second being a repeated note figure followed by a descending third, and the last being an

²⁸ Randy Boone, Interview, March 12, 2022.

²⁹ Samuel Funkhouser, Interview, March 13, 2022.

ascending scale pattern. I used these three motives as the motivic material for *Jerusalem* as I incorporated and developed them throughout my composition (Figure 21& 22).

Figure 20: Mary Simmons Walsh, Transcription of Hymn 455

455

Je - ru - sa - lem, my hap - home. Oh, how I long for -
 thee when will my sor rows have an end, thy joys when shall I see!

Figure 21: Mary Simmons Walsh, *Jerusalem*, mm. 18-21

gar - den plea-sant green
 gar - den thy plea-sant green
 gar - den and thy plea-sant green
 gar - den and thy plea-sant green oh,

Figure 22: Mary Simmons Walsh, *Jerusalem*, mm. 34-37

34

down thy arms of grace, and cause me to a - scend, where

down thy arm of grace and cause me to a - scend, where

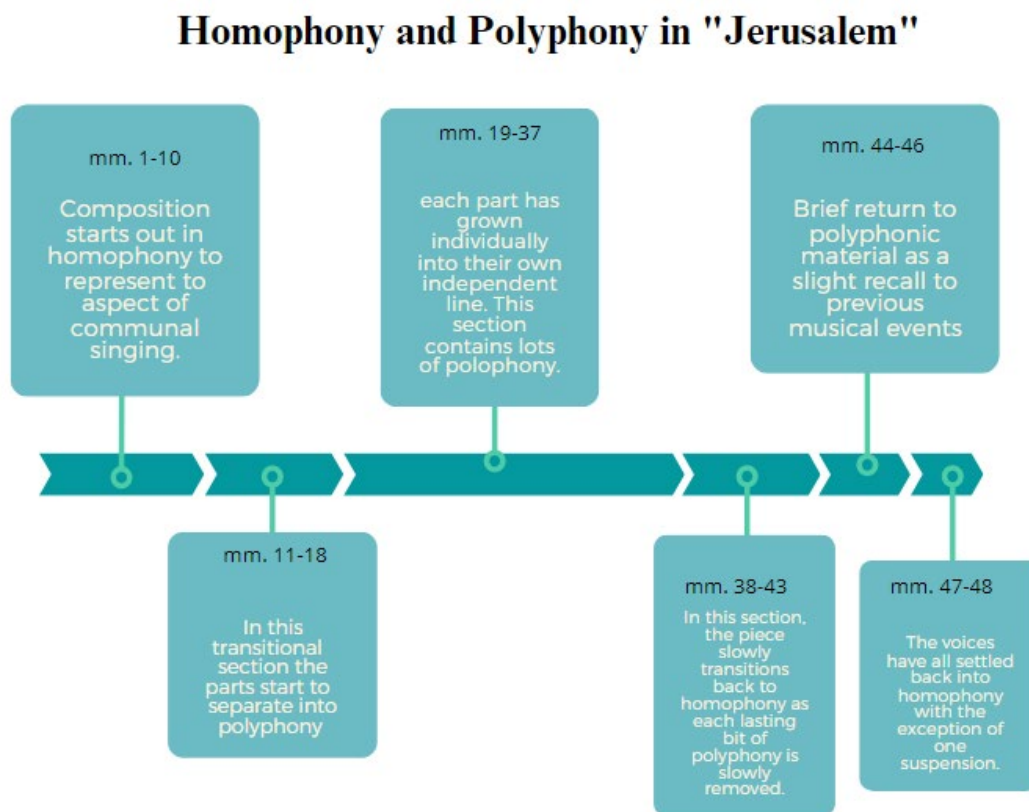
reach_down of grace and cause me to a - scend, where

down thy arms grace, and cause me to a - scend, where

When composing *Jerusalem*, I felt it was important to display the aspects of the Old German Baptist Brethren culture that favor the community versus the aspects that favor the individual. How they approach singing reflects the overall emphasis on the needs of the community outweighing the needs of the individual and the needs of the family outweighing the needs of the individual. Yet, they carry the belief that each person will individually have to answer to their Maker on judgment day; however, members do look forward to the time in which they will be reunited in Heaven with each other as a congregation. Figure 23 shows how the treatment of homophony and polyphony in *Jerusalem* reflect the community and the individual's relationship with God. The first verse is composed in strict polyphony except for the sustained A^a in voice four in measure 6. In measures 11 to 18, I chose to add staggered entrances at the beginning of each measure to create a small addition of polyphony. This arpeggiated texture is different from the first section that we heard. Even though there are instances where the

voice parts line up and sing the same rhythm, this section is built off voice 1 singing the lead while voices 2, 3, and 4 provide accompaniment. By measure 19 the voice parts have separated into more independent lines. In general, this section contains more individuality. During the next section, measures 38 to 43, I have chosen to slowly take the polyphony away as I am trying to reach a goal of all the voicing being in homophony by the end. However, there is a short diversion in measures 44-46, where I briefly recall past material before all the voices join together. The return to homophony symbolizes being reunited in Heaven with one's brethren.

Figure 23: Mary Simmons Walsh, Homophony and Polyphony in *Jerusalem*



There were also other artistic choices that were informed by my research. The beginning of the piece is meant to mimic how a deacon would start a hymn. Voice 2 starts the piece,

and the other voices have staggered entrances to resemble more people joining in as they start to recognize the tune (Figure 24). At the beginning of the composition, I purposely did not write my name as the composer. Writing your name as the composer would be considered prideful in the Old German Baptist Brethren Church. I also wrote this piece for four voices instead of a typical choral setting for soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. The formal arrangement of SATB voices is not present in their church. Instead, I opted to label the parts as voice 1, voice 2, voice 3, and voice 4.

Figure 24: Mary Simmons Walsh, *Jerusalem*, mm. 1-3

Jerusalem
The heavenly Jerusalem. -Rev. 21

A ♩ = 30 Extremely Slow

The musical score for 'Jerusalem' is written for four voices. It begins with a box containing the letter 'A' and the tempo marking '♩ = 30 Extremely Slow'. The key signature has four flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat, D-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into two measures. The first measure is a whole rest for all voices. The second measure contains the vocal lines. Voice 1 enters with a half note 'hap' followed by a quarter rest, then a half note 'py' followed by a quarter rest, and finally a half note 'home' followed by a quarter rest. Voice 2 enters with a quarter note 'Je', a quarter note 'ru', a quarter note 'sa', a quarter note 'lem', a quarter note 'my', a half note 'hap', a quarter note 'py', and a half note 'home'. Voice 3 enters with a quarter rest, then a quarter note 'lem', a quarter note 'my', a half note 'hap', a quarter note 'py', and a half note 'home'. Voice 4 enters with a quarter note 'ru', a quarter note 'sa', a quarter note 'lem', a quarter note 'my', a half note 'hap', a quarter note 'py', and a half note 'home'. All lyrics are underlined. Dynamic markings of *mf* are placed above the first notes of each voice part.

The vocal range of *Jerusalem* is influenced by my vocal range due to the logistical nature of what I can sing and record; however, it is my intention to allow flexibility on the voice types that can perform each part. Vocalists are free to sing the various parts in their chosen register. *Jerusalem* can be performed with as few as four vocalists but may also be performed by a larger ensemble as long as the parts are evenly distributed.

It is not my intention that my composition *Jerusalem* be an exact replica of the Old German Baptist Brethren singing style. Instead, *Jerusalem* is a piece with influences and references to their singing style that still maintains my voice as a composer. This is why I made various musical choices that are unrelated to the Old German Baptist Brethren hymn singing style. One of these choices is the addition of tone clusters in the lower voices making harmonic intervals of a second prevalent throughout the piece. There are also various moments in the composition where I include contrary motion between the voice parts. Lastly, I included textures of the melody supported by an arpeggiated accompaniment. I refrained from adding too many foreign stylistic choices in fear of straying too far from the source material.

This type of project was very hard for me to undertake due to my differing views from the Old German Baptist Brethren church. I thought about my grandmother and other women in their religion. It appears that people in the community are dependent upon the church, and women in the community are dependent upon men. I see an absence of independence and individuality allowed for women, and there does not seem to be a lot of nuance or space in their religion for differing opinions. It appears to me that everyone must conform to a set standard of beliefs. In this project, there was an interesting dichotomy between the pull to be an impartial observer and the need to say something significant through my composition. As a Christian, what is appealing to me about the text of *Jerusalem* is that it is not exclusive. God loves all His children, and there is a place for everyone in His kingdom.

CHAPTER 7: INFLUENCES AND CLOSING THOUGHTS

Musically, I am inspired by a very eclectic group of musicians. From the orchestral music of Aaron Copland to the Broadway musicals of Andrew Lloyd Webber to the Appalachian folk songs that I grew up singing, to the religious music I sang in church, to the works of classical guitar composers, to all sorts of popular music, I am influenced by new music every day. A musician's influences are the music they enjoy listening to every day. Whether one can hear a direct link between my music and the music I am influenced by is trivial. There are certain composers with whom I study their work to see what I can incorporate into my own music, and there are others with which I freely listen to their works as a means of enjoyment. Both avenues are influencing me whether I am conscious of it or not. There are always new avenues to explore and new ways to make music; however, most of the time, I do not sit down and try to write music in the style of another composer. I want to internalize influences so that they organically reappear in my work as versions of my own voice.

Because the themes of climate change, workers' rights, women's rights, and other topics are so pressing and important in my life and for the world at large, at times, I find it difficult to want to write about anything else. I have always felt like this to a certain extent as I am a result of my environment. So many political and social events have happened during my lifetime and during the past couple of years, and I would be remiss in not writing about them. Many other 21st-century composers also feel drawn to compose on these topics. To name a few, John Luther Adam's *The Become Trilogy*, and Ludovico Einaudi's *Elegy for the Arctic* both draw on similar themes. However, I do not think nearly enough work is being composed on these topics, or enough attention is being

given to these already composed works. I think the future of contemporary art music is to focus on social activism topics that speak of the experiences of people that are living today. I think so many people are blissfully unaware and ignorant of the experiences of others and the state of the world. By playing more Mozart, Bach, or any other composer from the "canon" we are allowing people to stay comfortably unaware. Everyone has their part to play in making significant social and political change, and the classically trained musician is not exempt. By not writing about these topics or playing music about these topics then we are sinning with our silence and we are making ourselves cowards.

In Rick Reuben's book, "The Creative Act: A Way of Being" he theorizes that certain creative ideas long to be brought into the world at certain times. This is the phenomenon where a composer or creative person might find that someone else is working on a creative project that is similar to their current project. One might feel like the other person is "copying them" or "stealing their idea," but in Rick Rubin's philosophy, it is just the universe saying it is time for that creative idea to be brought into existence. We can choose to be attuned to the signals that the universe is trying to communicate to us, and we can choose not to be.³⁰ In my writing, I am trying to be attuned to these frequencies in the best way I can by following topics that resonate and speak to me. A composer must write music with themselves as the number one artistic consideration. I do not believe one can write authentic music by chasing preconceived

³⁰ Rick Rubin, *The Creative Act: A Way of Being*, 167-214.

ideas of the listener's desires. For the benefit of the composer, performer, and audience, the composer has to put their musical taste first when composing.

My music is generally not experimental or particularly inventive. I do not feel called to progress a genre or to create new ways of writing or playing music. I am inspired by stories and human emotions, and I want to be able to use the best musical tools to convey those emotions. I have generally found that I am drawn to using tonal harmony in my compositions; however, I am not married to this approach. I am just looking for sounds that convey certain emotions and experiences. The emotions that the collections of sounds convey is more important than following any system or adhering to any set of "rules." For me, music is a way to communicate one's human experience to another. The human quality is where the art is found. I do not want to be an innovator as much as I want to be a communicator.

"You compose because you want to somehow summarize in some permanent form your most basic feelings about being alive, to set down... some sort of permanent statement about the way it feels to live now, today."-Aaron Copeland

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