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### A Graduate Recital in Conducting

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A GRADUATE RECITAL IN CONDUCTING

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in  
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of Master of Music

Noey De Leon

Pittsburg State University

Pittsburg, Kansas

May 2022

A GRADUATE RECITAL IN CONDUCTING

Noey De Leon

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I would also like to thank my professors throughout these two years: Kathryn Parke, Dr. Matthew Montague, Dr. Lydia Bechtel, and Dr. John Ross. They all have played a major role in getting me here.

Finally, a huge thanks to my friends and family. They have created a supportive and ensuring environment. This would not have been possible without them.

## A GRADUATE RECITAL IN CONDUCTING

An Abstract of the Thesis by  
Noey De Leon

This thesis serves as a part of Mr. De Leon's choral conducting recital and program notes. The music selected for this performance creates a tripartite concert structure. The first part will focus on the *villancico* from Baroque Mexico. The second includes pieces highlighting specific seasons of the Christian liturgical year. The final section is a choral response to the COVID-19 pandemic, music written for, during, and/or in response to the pandemic. These sections will include biographical information for each composer, performance notes, translations of texts, and other important information about each piece.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENT	PAGE
Chapter I: <i>Villancicos</i> from Baroque Mexico .....	1
Manuel de Sumaya .....	3
<i>Lucientes antorchas</i> .....	4
Juan Gutiérrez de Padilla .....	7
<i>Lágrimas por un niño</i> .....	8
Juanita Inés de la Cruz .....	10
<i>Madres, la de los primores</i> .....	11
Chapter II: The Liturgical Year .....	14
Advent & Christmas .....	14
Orlando di Lasso .....	15
<i>Exsultet coelum, mare</i> .....	16
Lent & Easter .....	17
Marques L. A. Garrett .....	18
<i>Were You There</i> .....	19
Pentecost .....	20
Amy Marcey Cheney Beach .....	21
<i>Peace I Leave With You</i> .....	22
All Saints' Day .....	23
Lloyd Larson .....	24
<i>Dwell in the Light Forevermore</i> .....	24
Chapter III: Choral Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic .....	26
Christopher Fox .....	27
<i>Bring A Song</i> .....	28
Ily Matthew Maniano .....	29
<i>Padayon</i> .....	29
Randall Kempton .....	31
<i>Abide With Me</i> .....	32
Sherry Blevins .....	33
<i>We Sing</i> .....	33
Bibliography .....	36

**Pittsburg State University  
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC**

**DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC**

***Graduate Recital***

**Noey De Leon, conductor**

Assisted by  
Jung Hee Lee, piano  
Peter Frost, organs  
PSU String Quartet

Sunday, April 24, 2022  
First United Methodist Church  
3:00 PM

**Program**

***Baroque Mexico***

Lucientes antorchas ..... Manuel de Sumaya  
(1678-1755)

Madre, la de los primores ..... Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz  
(c. 1648-1695)

Lágrimas de un niño ..... Juan Gutiérrez de Padilla  
(1590-1664)

Colten Shockley & Coleen Ndedi Ntepe, violin  
Annie Gipson, viola; Amber Bracken, cello  
Peter Frost, organ

***Liturgical Year***

Exsultet coelum, mare ..... Orlando di Lasso  
(1532-1594)

Were You There ..... Marques L. A. Garrett  
(b. 1984)

Peace I Leave With You ..... Amy Marcey Cheney Beach  
(1867-1944)

Dwell in the Light Forevermore ..... Lloyd Larson  
(b. 1954)

***Choral Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic***

Bring a Song ..... Christopher Fox  
(b. 1975)

Padayon ..... Ily Matthew Maniano  
(b. 1988)

Abide With Me ..... William H. Monk  
(1823-1889)  
arr. Randall Kempton

We Sing ..... Sherry Blevins

Kathryn Parke & Madison Westervelt, *descant*

***CHOIR MEMBERS***

***Soprano***

Hannah Caruthers  
Kimberly Harries  
Mackenzie Kerr  
Babs Kmiec  
Madeline Owen  
Kathryn Parke  
Gabby Roberts  
Josephine Shepard  
Xiaodi Xun

***Alto***

Erica Baldwin  
Annabella Beachner  
Destiny Davis  
Taylor Jones  
Sandra Stewart  
Madison Westervelt

***Tenor***

Dalton Knipp  
Isaac Hernandez  
Matthew Thompson  
Bill Vance  
Brock Willard

***Baritone/Bass***

Joseph Barnes  
Daniel Jackson  
Hunter Jacobs  
Zach Kamm  
Andrew Ortolani  
Ethan Pope  
Couri Reinholtz  
Kai Sarwinski  
Thomas Smith



## CHAPTER I

### VILLANCICOS FROM BAROQUE MEXICO

Mexico in the Baroque Era may not have been the bustling musical center of its time on the scale of Germany or other main European centers, but there have been great composers and works that came from it. The European colonization of Mexico was at its height. The region was highly influenced by European styles, specifically the Spanish-influenced style introduced by traveling priests of the Catholic Church. This led the music of this region to be more centered on that of the Catholic Church. The Spanish thought religion to be the simplest method of introducing the indigenous population to European music, through which they would more easily assimilate to European culture.<sup>1</sup> There are multiple 16th-century accounts of music that had been brought to Mexico from the Seville Cathedral in Spain, specifically choir part-books and organ music.<sup>2</sup> With these part-books came the understanding and incorporation of such compositional techniques as polyphonic and polychoral writing, as brought to Spain from Italy.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Teresa Bowers, "The Golden Age of Choral Music in the Cathedrals of Colonial Mexico," *Choral Journal*; Lawton, Okla. 40, no. 9 (April 2000): 9–13.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Murrell Stevenson, *Music in Mexico: A Historical Survey* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1952), 84.

<sup>3</sup> Harold Gleason, Warren Becker, and Harold Gleason, *Music in the Baroque*, 3d ed, *Music Literature Outlines*, ser. 2 (Bloomington, Ind: Frangipani Press, 1980), 62.

Through plenteous exchange and education of maestri, this music was adopted by 17th-century Mexico. Drawn from the traditional Catholic music was the Mass and Daily Office, using traditional Latin texts.<sup>4</sup> Blending various compositional techniques from European sacred music with that of regional culture and language, Mexican composers embraced the *villancico*, making it a hallmark of Baroque Mexico.

The *villancico* is roughly summarized as “a kind of religious song in the vernacular performed within a Mass or Matin”.<sup>5</sup> They started as a replacement for the Responsories during the Matins, which then became an exuberant and lively exaltation with the addition of the *villancico*.<sup>6</sup> Though written for various holy days and seasons, the *villancicos* that were specifically composed for Christmas services were characteristically joyful in nature, fitting for a celebration of this importance. The subjects were the shepherds and peasants and portrayed what they experienced while on their way to Bethlehem. These were so popular and common that in the music library of John IV of Portugal there were 2,285 *villancicos* cataloged in 1649 alone. Of these, 1,004 were written for Christmas; 522 for the Feast of Corpus Christi; and 147 for the Epiphany, the season following Christmas.<sup>7</sup> According to records at the Archivo del Cabildo Catedral Metropolitano de México (ACMM), there were three leading composers in Mexico City at the time who produced a fair number of *villancicos*. Of what has been conserved there, there are 52 by Antonio de Salazar, 33 by Manuel de Sumaya, and 32 by Ignacio Jerusalem.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> George J. Buelow, *A History of Baroque Music* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 367.

<sup>5</sup> Buelow, *A History of Baroque Music*, 370.

<sup>6</sup> Buelow, *A History of Baroque Music*, 371.

<sup>7</sup> Buelow, *A History of Baroque Music*, 371.

<sup>8</sup> Drew Edward Davies, “Villancicos from Mexico City for the Virgin of Guadalupe,” *Early Music* 39, no. 2 (May 2011): 232.

The structure of the *villancico* typically has two main sections: the *estribillo* (refrain) and *coplas* (verses). The *estribillo* breaks down into two segments, the *introducción* (introduction by soloists) and *responsión* (response by the choir) that proceeds into the *coplas* and then returns to the *responsión* section or the entire *estribillo* in what is called the *vuelta* (return).<sup>9</sup>

### MANUEL DE SUMAYA

From this point, roughly the start of the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Mexico, a major contributor to the vernacular *villancico* comes into focus at the Mexico City Cathedral: Manuel de Sumaya (sometimes listed as Zumaya). Sumaya was a composer, organist, ordained priest, and *maestro de capilla* and is believed to be the first to have been both born and trained in colonial Latin America.<sup>10</sup> He lived from roughly 1678 to 1755 and would eventually serve as the *maestro de capilla* of the Mexico City Cathedral from 1715 to 1738, then in the same post at the Oaxaca Cathedral from 1745 until his death. He was not only a composer and chapel-master but a “trained singer, teacher of plainchant and counterpoint...”.<sup>11</sup> Sumaya is presumed to have been a student of Antonio de Salazar whom he succeeded as the *maestro de capilla* at the Mexico City Cathedral upon Salazar’s death. Then, in 1738 Sumaya left to Oaxaca where he was appointed *maestro de capilla* in 1745. He spent his remaining years at that position. One of the most notable achievements of Sumaya was his opera *La Parténope* which is commonly believed to

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<sup>9</sup> Buelow, *A History of Baroque Music*, 370.

<sup>10</sup> Manuel de Zumaya and Drew Edward Davies, *Villancicos from Mexico City, Recent researches in the music of the Baroque Era* 206 (Middleton, Wisconsin: A-R Editions, Inc, 2019), xii.

<sup>11</sup> Davies, *Villancicos from Mexico City*, xii.

have been the very first opera written in the New World. It was performed for the birthday of King Philip V on May 1, 1711 at the palace of the Viceroy of New Spain, the Duke of Linares.<sup>12</sup> An interesting aspect of this particular opera was that the libretto was written by the Italian librettist Silvio Stampiglia.

Of the *villancicos* Sumaya composed, most are written in the traditional style that hails from Spain and Europe, although there are some that exhibit some cantata-like characteristics such as definite recitatives and arias, and use of multiple choirs, all clearly Italian features. He was very conservative with his harmonies, employing mostly diatonic chords in root position. The cathedral at Mexico City, where he wrote the bulk of his works, should not be overlooked when analyzing his polychoral works. The cathedral is massive, containing several altars and statues along the perimeter of its open nave with arches and columns throughout. At the center and along the length of the nave is the choir and organ lined with railing and an altar at each end, the Altar of Forgiveness and the Altar of the Kings. Having the choir and organ at the center of the cathedral and the setup in an oblong formation provided composers such as Sumaya the opportunity to compose polychoral works much like what had been created for St. Mark's in Venice. This is what made pieces such as *Lucientes antorchas* so special for the people of Mexico City.

### LUCIENTES ANTORCHAS

This *villancico* was written in 1726 for Saint Ildephonsus of Toledo, a major saint throughout Spain at that time, whose feast day is celebrated on the twenty-third of

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<sup>12</sup> Buelow, A History of Baroque Music, 400.

January. Saint Ildephonsus was an archbishop, having been ordained as priest in c.637 and then ascending to archbishop in 657. He is most notably known for his writings on the Virgin Mary, especially the story of a vision he had of her wherein she gave him a chasuble while he was seated on his episcopal throne.<sup>13</sup>

This piece is scored for two choirs, both of which are for treble (soprano), alto, tenor, and bass (untexted) with continuo accompaniment. The ranges for each part are reasonable, although the alto parts, expected to be performed by the male voice, are considerably low, ranging from A3 to A4. Though varying degrees of instrumentation and combinations of instruments have been explored today, Drew Edward Davies insists that there is insufficient scholarship to know exactly what the performance practices in Mexico City were at the time. As it was, the violin was only introduced at the cathedral in 1715 with Sumaya's support.<sup>14</sup> It was, throughout Europe and Spain, customary to double each voice with an instrument such as the sackbut, positive organ, and/or strings. Taking into account what Sumaya would have had available to him at the Mexico City Cathedral at that time, he would have had access to "two small positive organs, *bajones* [dulcian], harp, and bass violin".<sup>15</sup> Considering both of these pieces of information, it became a clear choice to have a string quartet along with a positive organ doubling both choirs, playing a composite accompaniment.

In performance notes listed in Davies' anthology, he states that the bass lines of each choir would have implied the addition of an accompanying instrument. In light of this, it seemed logical to also insert text into the untexted bass lines. Care was taken when

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<sup>13</sup> David Farmer, "Ildephonsus of Toledo" (Oxford University Press, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780199596607.013.0848>.

<sup>14</sup> Davies, *Villancicos from Mexico City*, xvi.

<sup>15</sup> Davies, *Villancicos from Mexico City*, xvi.

assigning the text to ensure it was in line with the rest of the ensemble. The added text was italicized in the score.

The overall structure of *Lucientes antorchas* is fairly simple. It begins with an *estribillo*, or chorus, that incorporates both choir one and two antiphonally, delivering the following text:

Lucientes antorchas del sacro zafir, venid al aplauso, al festejo venid, que Ildefonso en campaña, sagrado adalid, sale contra el hereje que intenta manchar el oro más puro que ha dado el Ofir.	Bright torches of sacred sapphire, come to the applause, come to the festival, for Ildephonsus' campaign, holy warrior, he fights against the heretic who threatens to stain the purest gold that was given by Ophir. <sup>16</sup>
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This very dramatic text is presented in a celebratory style in a dance-like triple meter and plenteous call-and-response across both choirs. The “purest gold given by Ophir” here is referring to the port city in the Bible whose king, King Solomon, would receive cargo every three years containing many riches, including the purest gold. Following this section are the *coplas*, or verses. There are only three, a relatively small number compared to Sumaya’s other *villancicos*. The verses for this section are:

1. Empañar intenta ufano la pureza del carmín que encarnó en intacta concha del mar de las gracias mil.	1. They cheerfully try to tarnish the purity of the crimson who is the untouched shell incarnate from the sea of a thousand graces.
2. Salió luego a la defensa Ildefonso y tan sutil arguyó contra el hereje que quedó vencido allí.	2. Then Ildefonsus came to our defense and argued subtly with the heretic who was defeated right there.
3. Cantó el cielo la victoria	3. The heavens sang the victory,

---

<sup>16</sup> This, along with all other translations in this thesis, were done by Noey De Leon with the assistance of family, colleagues, and ASTA-USA.

descendiendo a aqueste fin  
su misma reina sagrada  
aqueste triunfo a aplaudir.

as it ends.  
Then descends his Sacred Queen  
to applaud the triumph.

He scored this for a smaller group drawn from choir one, the alto and tenor lines, with basso continuo accompanying. Again using what is suggested by Davies, there would have been a change in texture also for the accompaniment, reduced to only the cello and organ. These verses would have been assigned as solos to the top singers at the cathedral. After the *coplas*, it is rounded off with a return to the opening section (*estribillo*) to the *fine*. The overall form resembles a basic da capo form with a strophic B section, fairly typical of Sumaya's *villancicos*. The harmonic structure never deviates beyond basic, diatonic chords.

### JUANA INÉS DE LA CRUZ

Doña Juana Inés de Asbaje y Ramírez de Santillana was born in the village of Nepantla (between Mexico City and Puebla) around 1651. She began to read at age three and worked through every book in her grandfather's library. Recognized as a child prodigy, she was highly favored among the viceregal court and was noted for her exceptional beauty and sharp inclination for verse. In 1667, she joined the convent at the Order of Discalced Carmelites as a singer where she gained her ecclesiastical name, Sor (Sister) Juana Inés de la Cruz, now more widely known as such.<sup>17</sup> Within the strict order, Sor Juana was not allowed much time to write and was barred from receiving visits from

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<sup>17</sup> Irving Albert Leonard, *Baroque Times in Old Mexico: Seventeenth-Century Persons, Places, and Practices*, Ann Arbor Paperbacks 110 (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 172-173.

adoring fans of her writings. After only three months there, she fell ill and left the order. The next year, she joined the Hieronymite convent of San Jerónimo in Mexico City, an order that was much less strict with its discipline within the convent walls.<sup>18</sup> It was here that Sor Juana was able to write, study, and receive her admirers, all within her own cell with her personal slave at hand.<sup>19</sup>

Over the following years, she continued her writing and study, mostly avoiding counsel and direction from confessors of the convent. It was her own confessor, Father Antonio Núñez de Miranda, who urged her to switch focus from “worldly matters” to those of the religious. Throughout her writings, Sor Juana constantly addressed her longing to be set free from the prejudice and duty of being a woman in 17th-century Mexico. After 26 years at San Jerónimo, Sor Juana seemed to have had enough and renounced all her possessions, all of which were sold and proceeds given to charity. She signed this document with her own blood, “I, Sister Juana Inés de la Cruz, the worst in the world.” After self-induced, physical acts of penance, Sor Juana received continued care from sisters of the convent for her injuries until she succumbed.<sup>20</sup>

## MADRE, LA DE LOS PRIMORES

Much of Sor Juana’s poetry was set by the many composers and *maestri de capilla* from surrounding Mexico City, Puebla, and Oaxaca. These include Joseph de Agurto y Loaysa, Antonio de Salazar, Miguel Matheo de Dallo y Lana and Matheo

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<sup>18</sup> Asunción Lavrín, *Brides of Christ: Conventual Life in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2008), 347.

<sup>19</sup> Asunción, *Brides of Christ*, 345.

<sup>20</sup> Leonard, *Baroque Times in Old Mexico*, 191.



Vallados. This particular *villancico* seems to be written by Sor Juana herself, though some scholars have doubts about that.<sup>21</sup>

In the original manuscript held at the Música Colonial Archive in Guatemala (available through the International Music Score Library Project), the bass voice is not texted.<sup>22</sup> For this performance, that voice is played by the cello and positive organ. The upper three voices, soprano one and two and alto, all have reasonable ranges within themselves. The two soprano parts are co-equal, with consistent voice crossing throughout the *villancico*. At each ending section (after the verses and after the refrain), the second soprano ends above the first.

The design of *Madre, la de los primores* is very simple when compared with other *villancicos* of this time and place. There are only two major sections, though not named in the manuscript. It begins with four verses, all voices delivering the following text:

1. Madre, la de los primores,  
la que es virgen siendo madre.  
La madre de tantas hijas,  
y madre de tantos padres.

2. Señora reformadora,  
la que a sus benditos frailes,  
los trae por esos desiertos,  
al sol, a la nieve, al aire.

3. El premio de sus trabajos  
paga el cielo conmandarle,  
que para que al cielo suban,  
les haga que descalsen.

4. Descanse muy buen hora  
en el templo que el hace,  
quien amante solicita

1. Mother, of the first born,  
the Virgin Mother.  
The mother of so many daughters,  
and mother of so many fathers.

2. Reforming Lady,  
the one who for her blessed friars,  
guides them through the deserts,  
the sun, the snow, the wind.

3. The reward of their hard work  
pays heaven to give them,  
who for the heavens raise,  
they will find peace.

4. Rest well now  
in the temple that He has made,  
whoever passionately seeks

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<sup>21</sup> “Sor Juana’s Mexico City Musical Coadjutors,” *Inter-American Music Review* 15, no. 1 (Winter-Spring 1996): 23–37.

<sup>22</sup> Cruz, Juana Inés de la, *Madre, la de los primores* (Public domain, 1694)  
[https://imslp.org/wiki/Madre\\_la\\_de\\_los\\_primores\\_\(Juana\\_In%C3%A9s\\_de\\_la\\_Cruz\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Madre_la_de_los_primores_(Juana_In%C3%A9s_de_la_Cruz)).

que de trabajar descanse.

now after your hard work you can  
rest.

These account for the majority of the *villancico* and are followed by the refrain (*estribillo*). This is performed in a faster, triple meter, imparting gaiety to the text of the following two lines.

Goza hoy en tu templo felicidades,  
pues de tu esposo eres divino Atlante.

Now enjoy in your temple of  
happiness,  
because of your divine husband  
Atlas.

Here, Sor Juana might have been equating God to Atlas, the Greek Titan who held the world on his shoulders. The verse/refrain alternation continues through the remainder of the text, and the *villancico* ends following a final statement of the *estribillo*.

### JUAN GUTIÉRREZ DE PADILLA

Padilla was born in 1590 and went on to train in Málaga, Spain. Showing promise fairly early, he was appointed to two *maestro de capilla* positions: one at Jerez de la Frontera just south of Seville at the age of twenty-three, and the other at Cádiz Cathedral right on the port of Cádiz, at twenty-six. He was at this position until 1622 when he moved overseas to the Puebla Cathedral, not very far from Mexico City.<sup>23</sup> He started there as cantor and assistant maestro under Gaspar Fernandes, another great composer of Baroque Mexico. After Fernandes' death in 1629, Padilla was appointed *maestro de capilla*, a position he retained for the rest of his life. In 1654, the cathedral chapter

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<sup>23</sup> Dennis Shrock, *Choral Repertoire* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 348.

reduced the budget and salaries, thus starting a gradual phasing out by Padilla. Though he continued with a few teaching duties and some writing, his health declined, leading to his death in April of 1664.<sup>24</sup>

### LÁGRIMAS DE UN NIÑO

This *villancico* is part of a *cuaderno* (notebook) of music for Christmas services, a collection from the services for the years 1653, 1655, and 1657. During this time in Padilla's career, there had been urgency from the Latin American council to collect and preserve his music.<sup>25</sup> These *cuadernos*, along with his other works, were well-conserved and offer us the ability to see that he favored the polychoral sound, employing the technique in works for every Sunday and feast day from as far back as 1623.

Extracted from the Christmas service music from 1657, *Lágrimas de un niño* is for double choir. It features somewhat unusual voicing, each choir scored for only three voices. The first is written for soprano, alto, and bass and the second for alto, tenor, and bass. Choir one opens the *villancico* (*introducción*) with a canon in an A minor tonality presenting the first stanza of the text:

Lágrimas de un niño,  
ternezas de un Dios,  
si por mí las llora,  
¡qué dulces que son!

Tears from a little boy,  
tenderness of a God,  
if it is for me he cries,  
how sweet they are!

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<sup>24</sup> Robert Stevenson, "The 'Distinguished Maestro' of New Spain: Juan Gutiérrez de Padilla," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 35, no. 3 (1955): 370–71, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2509527>.

<sup>25</sup> Koegel, "Padilla, Juan Gutiérrez De," <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.20676>.

Choir one continues with the following text in the *respuesta* (response) which is sectioned and echoed by choir two antiphonally with the same material.

El rigor las causa  
si las busca amor,  
¡qué dulces que son!

The rigor causes them  
if you look for love,  
how sweet they are!

que lo ingrato siempre  
duplica el dolor,  
¡qué dulces que son!

for whoever are always ungrateful  
they double the pain,  
how sweet they are!

The choirs converge with successive iterations of “qué dulces que son!” in a stunning although brief phrase of polyphony. Padilla chose to close this section with an A major triad (the raised third appearing only in the soprano of choir 1), perhaps bringing the seemingly somber text to a more hopeful and expectant sentiment.

The *estribillo/responsión* (refrain/response) section returns to the minor sonority and in a triple meter, contrasting with the duple meter of the opening. He uses only choir two for this section which creates a more introspective effect on the first two lines of the text. For the lines that follow those, choir two joins with long values on “Llore yo, llore yo” (I cry, I cry), followed by impressive imitative entrances from every voice throughout both choirs that runs into a striking polyphonic section.

Más si el daño que padece  
lo siente por mi ocasión,  
Llore yo, llore yo  
pues a tantas excesos obliga  
la fuerza de mi sin razón.

The more he feels the pain  
it is because of my actions,  
I cry, I cry  
because the excess force  
and stress of mine for no reason.

This brings the *villancico* to the verses (*coplas*), delivering four verses using alternating choirs with the same material but different voicings. These verses are

somewhat chromatic, a change that corresponds with the shift in the the text's character.

The verses are as follows:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Sentir por mí la pena,<br>sufrir por mí el dolor,<br>hermoso niño mío<br>muchas finezas son.       | 1. Feel the sorrow for me,<br>suffer for me my pain,<br>my beautiful child<br>what fine things they are.  |
| 2. Por mí tendréis de amante<br>el crédito mayor,<br>que son vuestras finezas<br>de mi satisfacción.  | 2. For me you will have a lover<br>of great credit,<br>that are your compliments<br>of my own indulgence. |
| 3. Antes que os mereciera<br>mi bien tanto favor,<br>erais un Dios terrible<br>más ya otra cosa soís. | 3. Before I earned<br>such kindness,<br>you were a dreadful God<br>but not anymore.                       |
| 4. Decidme niño hermoso:<br>¿qué fuerza os obligó,<br>a que paguéis la fruta<br>que no comisteis vos? | 4. Tell me beautiful child:<br>what forced you<br>to pay for the fruit<br>you did not eat?                |

After the fourth verse, the choirs return to the *responsión* section with “Llore yo, llore yo”, and finish the section, bringing the piece to its close. As mentioned with the verses, Padilla's music does employ chromaticism, but the writing is never anything jarring or out of character.

## CHAPTER II

### THE LITURGICAL YEAR

In the Christian liturgical calendar, there are seasons and holy days that occur annually. Some of these seasons and holy days include Advent, Christmas, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, and All Saints' Day. Many composers have written music for them throughout history, given their importance. Of course, church music was the primary source of composition for many hundreds of years spanning the Medieval period through much of the Baroque. Those compositions set immovable texts from the Mass Ordinary and the fluctuating texts of the Proper as well as other texts from the liturgy. Texts honoring the subjects of these seasons became customary, for example the Trinity, Jesus Christ, Virgin Mary, many saints, and others. For this performance, four seasons were selected to highlight: Advent/Christmas, Lent/Easter, Pentecost, and All Saints' Day.

### ADVENT & CHRISTMAS

The Advent season, starting on the fourth Sunday before Christmas, represents the church's expected coming of Christ on Christmas Day, December 25.

## ORLANDO DI LASSO

Lasso was born just south of Brussels, Belgium in 1532. Not very much is known about his youth until his adolescence, when he joined various courts throughout Italy, eventually obtaining a singing position at the court of Antonio Altoviti in Rome. While in Rome, Lasso was appointed the *maestro di cappella* position at San Giovanni in Laterano. He served there for about a year before returning to Brussels to care for his parents. In 1556, he was hired to sing for the court of Duke Albrecht V of Bavaria in Munich and was appointed *Hofkapellmeister* seven years later. He remained at this position until his death in 1594.<sup>26</sup>

Motets were Lasso's most popular genre, having written nearly six hundred with widely varying voicings and textures. Much akin to his contemporaries, his writing ranges from more homophonic and simple sections to overlapping and complex lines with unbounding counterpoint. There are even a few polychoral works. These also have very diversified context and purpose; some use secular Latin texts and poems while others set sacred texts. Many were written for special occasions including Lasso's own wedding in 1558. With the exception of Marian motets, which appear in multiple configurations, Lasso rarely set the same text more than once.<sup>27</sup> Though not exactly Marian, *Exsultet caelum, mare* offers commentary on the story of the Nativity, based on scripture.

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<sup>26</sup> Shrock, Choral Repertoire, 112-113.

<sup>27</sup> Shrock, Choral Repertoire, 114-115.

## EXSULTET COELUM, MARE

This work was first published in his *Moduli quinis vocibus nunquam hactenus editi* from 1571. According to a 2002 review of A-R's edition of Lasso's motets, this collection of works was published just after his return from the French capital. With this collection came a patent of authorial privilege by Charles IX giving Lasso full control of the publication of his works while in France.<sup>28</sup>

The text does not directly quote scripture, but rather references a biblical account, clearly exulting the Nativity of Our Lord. This is scored for soprano, alto, two tenors, and bass. The following text is delivered by all voices, with the exception of the first tenor:

Exsultet coelum, mare, sol,  
                  luna et sidera,  
quia fulgens clare Deus per omnia,  
en jacet in cunabulis et pendet  
                  ad ubera,  
concrepat vagitibus ipsa laetitia.

Let the heavens, the sea, the sun, the  
                  moon and the stars exult,  
for God shines brightly through all,  
lo he lies in the cradle and hangs  
                  at the breast,  
his cries resound with joy.

Potentia fit impotens, fit egens  
                  divitia,  
et sitit atque esurit qui pascit omnia,  
vexatur et algoribus qui vestit lilia,  
immensus et innumerus fert infantalia.

The omnipotent relinquishes all  
                  power,  
he who feeds and nourishes all is  
                  thirsty and hungry himself,  
he who clothes the lilies pains with  
                  cold,  
he humbles himself as an infant.

This motet is among those in which Lasso incorporates a cantus firmus. The first tenor line delivers the cantus firmus, repeating the five-measure figure at two different pitch levels, *in perpetuum*. James Haar states, that this continues to be “something of a

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<sup>28</sup> Richard Freedman, Review of A-R's edition of The Complete Motets of Lasso, “Music Reviews,” Notes 58, no. 3 (2002): 673.



puzzle,” as the origin of this specific cantus firmus is not known.<sup>29</sup> It renders the following text:

Quis audivit talia, dic mirabilia.

Who has heard such great things,  
proclaim such miracles.

According to Peter Bergquist, an editor of the A-R edition of Lasso motets, knowing the instruments that would have been available to Lasso in Munich, it is acceptable to imagine that the choir would have been doubled.<sup>30</sup> Bergquist provides the caveat that Lasso would presumably not have replaced any one part with an instrument, seeing as the text is important to convey.

Both stanzas of the main text are sung with staggered, imitative entrances. The first starts with bass, followed by second tenor, soprano, then alto. The second is the same, apart from bass and the second tenor entering together. The first tenor joins a few measures later for both. The piece features sweeping lines and highly contrapuntal music with no moments of homophony by the whole choir, only with smaller combinations.

## LENT & EASTER

During the forty days of Lent, a great penitence is observed as this is the time leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. These forty days coincide with the forty

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<sup>29</sup> James Haar, “Lasso as Historicist: The Cantus-Firmus Motets,” in *Hearing the Motet : Essays on the Motet of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Dolores Pesce (Cary, United States: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 1998), 272.

<sup>30</sup> Peter. Bergquist, *The Complete Motets : Afterword, Addenda and Corrigenda, Indexes*, vol. 148S (Middleton, Wis: A-R Editions, 2006), 6.

days and forty nights Jesus fasted and went into the wilderness and was tempted by Satan.

The final week of Lent is called Holy Week and begins with Palm Sunday, marking Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Later that week, he would be tried before Pontius Pilate, for his presence and actions threatened to undermine all in authority at the time. The Friday of Holy Week is Good Friday and the day on which Christians remember the crucifixion of Christ. The following Sunday morning is Easter, when Christians celebrate the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

#### MARQUES L. A. GARRETT

Dr. Garrett earned his bachelor's degree from Hampton University, studying with Dr. Carl G. Harris, Jr. He went on to receive a Master of Music degree from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and obtained a position as Director of Choral Activities at Cheyney University at Pennsylvania. After this, he earned a PhD in Music Education, with an emphasis in Choral Conducting, from Florida State University where he studied with Dr. André J. Thomas. He currently serves as an Assistant Professor of Music in Choral Activities at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in the Glenn Korff School of Music, where he conducts the Chamber Singers, University Chorale, and teaches other choral courses. An active singer himself, Dr. Garrett is often called to be a guest conductor or clinician at schools, churches, and honor choirs throughout the United States. His music has been performed by choirs at all-state music conferences, by

collegiate ensembles such as the Oakwood University Aeolians, and by professional choirs such as Seraphic Fire.<sup>31</sup>

## WERE YOU THERE

*Were you there* is an African American spiritual, timeless and known by many, more commonly and suitably performed during Lent. The text conveys what Jesus' final moments at the crucifixion may have been. The following text is taken from the traditional text of the spiritual to which Garrett has added a fourth stanza of his own:

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?  
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble.  
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were there when they nailed him to the tree?  
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble.  
Were there when they nailed him to the tree?

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?  
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble.  
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

They crucified my Lord.  
They nailed him to the tree.  
They pierced him in his side.  
The blood came streaming down.  
They laid him in the tomb.  
(Then he rose that day!  
Now he reigns on high!)

This setting, written for four-part choir and piano, opens with basses singing, "Were you there," on a pedal tone and the upper voices reiterating the same text, quoting

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<sup>31</sup> Marques L. A. Garrett, "Marques L. A. Garrett", Marques L. A. Garrett, 2022, <https://www.mlagmusic.com/bio>.

the opening notes. The altos and basses take the tune in octaves, singing the first line of text, followed by the sopranos and tenors with the same line of text, also in octaves. This continues to four-part texture offering the rest of the text from the first stanza and harmonically-extended phrase on, “Were you there when they crucified my Lord?”

Each time he sets the three stanzas of the text, Garrett presents the first line with the same treatment as the start: pedal point in the bass and planing upper voices. This is followed by unique settings, and often fragmented repetition, of the same line. After the third stanza, the choir sings homophonically using the last lines of the text. This employs a gradual crescendo from mezzo-piano to forte, adding significantly to the drama and fervor of the text. On the line, “The blood came streamin’ down,” Garrett gives the only embellishment in this section with a three-note falling figure, supplying weight and attention to this seemingly minor detail within the narrative. If performed on or before Good Friday, Garrett instructs that after, “They laid him in the tomb,” to jump to measure 86 with the choir finishing the piece with, “Oh, were you there?” If performed on or after Easter Day, the building momentum leads to a joyous end with *divisi* throughout the sections, adding to the texture of the ensemble: “Now he reigns on high!”

## PENTECOST

Pentecost is observed on the seventh Sunday, roughly 50 days, after Easter. This celebrates the belief that the Holy Spirit gives life and draws together the church. This references the second chapter of the Book of Acts when, on the day of Pentecost, there came a loud thundering and rushing wind throughout a gathering of Jesus’ followers.

Then tongues of fire appeared and touched all within the house. So moved by the Holy Spirit, many from the crowd of people stood and spoke in tongues of a language unknown to them. Though the many people in the house were from many different nations and tongues, they all understood what was spoken.

### AMY MARCY CHENEY BEACH

More commonly known in years past as Mrs. H. H. A. Beach, Amy Marcy Cheney Beach was born in New Hampshire in 1867. Showing promise for music by age two, she played improvised melodies at the piano. Her own mother, a pianist and singer, started lessons with the young musician who proved she could master works by Beethoven, Chopin, and others by age seven. Beach earned her fame as a concert pianist at seventeen playing Chopin's *Piano Concerto in F minor, Op. 21* with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. After marrying physician and Harvard lecturer, Dr. Henry Harris Aubrey Beach (Dr. H. H. A. Beach, for her lifetime's namesake), she went on to teach herself harmony, orchestration, and counterpoint and began to compose her own works. After her husband's passing, Beach moved to Europe for a short while where she gave concerts. In 1914, she moved back to the United States where she stayed for the remainder of her life. Amy Beach died in 1944.<sup>32</sup>

An Episcopalian herself, Beach wrote a great deal of sacred music for the church service including her *Mass in E-flat major, Op. 5* and *Service in A, Op. 63*. She also

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<sup>32</sup> Shrock, Choral Repertoire, 555.

wrote secular works including the *Gaelic Symphony in E minor, Op. 32* and *Piano Concerto in C-sharp minor, Op. 45*.

## PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU

This piece is scored simply for soprano, alto, tenor, and bass, and has all parts doubled by the organ, an option that was not taken for this performance. The earliest known publication of this is currently held at University of New Hampshire, and is available on IMSLP. Through this resource, it is known that this piece was published in 1891 as part of a set of pieces titled *3 Choral Responses, Op. 8*, of which this is the third.<sup>33</sup> The text is taken from the Gospel of John, Chapter 14, Verse 27 (King James version). This section of text comes from an intimate moment when Jesus comforts his disciples as they prepare for his crucifixion. Jesus explains, as they are perplexed about where he is going, that he is not leaving them behind, but rather preparing a place for them. The words of comfort Jesus offers them reads as follows:

Peace I leave with you,  
my peace I give unto you.  
Not as the world giveth give I unto you.  
Let not your heart be troubled.

Composers in the United States during the Romantic Era drew much of their inspiration and style from such European composers such as Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and even earlier composers such as Handel.<sup>34</sup> Beach continues that tradition with this

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<sup>33</sup> “3 Choral Responses, Op.8,” International Music Score Library Project, 2015, [https://imslp.org/wiki/3\\_Choral\\_Responses%2C\\_Op.8\\_\(Beach%2C\\_Amy\\_Marcy\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/3_Choral_Responses%2C_Op.8_(Beach%2C_Amy_Marcy)).

<sup>34</sup> Shrock, Choral Repertoire, 545.

simple piece, employing expressive phrases and subdued harmonies. It is rooted in E-flat major with only a few instances when it tonicizes closely related chords (such as beat four of measure five through the end of the phrase, where Beach moves to the dominant area of B-flat, and uses softer dynamics). In the following phrase, Beach begins in the parallel E-flat minor, giving the text, “Not as the world giveth give I unto you,” some drama and underlining. This change in tonality along with a gradual crescendo to a mezzo-forte brings the piece to its loudest moment, delivering the third line of text.

The last phrase calms the piece as the Lord’s promise of comfort is conveyed, “Let not your heart be troubled.” There is an expressive harmonic treatment for the first appearance of the word “heart,” where an E diminished seventh is positioned over its chord of resolution (F minor, 1<sup>st</sup> inversion). The same line of text is repeated and the piece ends in E-flat major.

## ALL SAINTS’ DAY

All Saints’ Day is the memorial of all saints, known or unknown, on the first of November. This is a time when Christians are reminded of the reward of their devout faith and what is awaiting them at the time of their passing. An often-set text for this day comes from the Book of Matthew, Chapter 5, Verses 3 to 12, called The Beatitudes. These are promises from Jesus for all followers of the faith, the unified theme among all texts for this day.

## LLOYD LARSON

A household name in the world of church music today, Lloyd Larson has claimed fame with over 1,500 published works ranging in a vast array of ensembles set for many different church seasons. Larson earned his bachelor's degree from Anderson University in Indiana, and then a Master of Church Music degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.<sup>35</sup>

## DWELL IN THE LIGHT FOREVERMORE

This piece was written soon after and upon the news of the horrible events that took place at Sandy Hook Elementary School in December of 2012. The unexpected and incomprehensible loss of life from these events so moved Larson to set Susan Boersma's text *Dwell in the Light Forevermore* to music. Boersma received her education from Hope College in Michigan and is a composer herself though more known for her texts set by composers such as Mark Hayes, Craig Courtney, Joseph Martin, and Lloyd Larson.<sup>36</sup> Her text is as follows:

Through the valley of shadows, lost in the dark of night,  
our God goes before us to lead us to the light.  
There will be no more night!  
No need for lamp or ray of sun, the Lamb will be the light.  
There will be no more night!  
No need to fast, to watch, to week around the throne so bright.

Out of the valley of shadows, we step into the day.  
We see the Lamb upon the throne and hear the Saviour say,  
"Well done, well done, my good and faithful one!"

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<sup>35</sup> "Lloyd Larson," The Lorenz Corp., 2022, <https://lorenz.com/composers-and-authors/meet-our-composers/lloyd-larson>.

<sup>36</sup> "Susan Bentall Boersma," Jubilate Music Group, n.d., <https://jubilatemusic.com/pages/susan-bentall-boersma>.



Well done, well done!  
Come, dwell in the Light of Life forevermore!”<sup>37</sup>

The piano accompaniment begins a theme that is restated throughout the piece. The sopranos and altos enter in unison followed by the tenors and basses with the same line, also in unison. Then the choir proceeds with the melody in four parts. The form repeats, resembling the introductory material by the piano and now two-part choir delivery of the second half of the text. Upon the words, “Well done, well done,” the ensemble sings with a grand and proud piano accompaniment. In between the repeated statements of “Well done,” the piano sounds almost as drum and cymbal on the second half of the measure, hammering an accented, low-register chord of open fifths. The piece continues using the opening melodic material and a final restatement of “Come, dwell in the Light of Life forevermore!”

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<sup>37</sup> Reprinted by permission from Lorenz Corporation, Dwell in the Light Forevermore (U.S.A: Lorenz Publishing Company, 2013)..

## CHAPTER III

### CHORAL RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

With the crashing wave of the Covid-19 pandemic came the temporary suspension of music programs and public concerts throughout the world. There were many concerns over just how contagious and transmissible the virus was, so began the implementation of lockdowns and isolations. In the moment, it seemed there was no end in sight, and choirs began to mourn what once was. With Pittsburg State University's own choirs, certain precautions were taken during the Fall 2020 semester to ensure the safety of all students. Specifically, rehearsals were not held in McCray Hall's recital hall, the choirs' home for years. Outdoor rehearsals with proper spacing between all singers and conductor along with double masks became the everyday procedure. At its height, the locations were various, including parking lots on campus, the area underneath the campus stadium seating, and the Veterans Memorial amphitheater, chosen specifically for its semi-circular formation. From these locations, the ensembles recorded and presented online concerts with audio and video format.

As time went on, there was talk of protection via vaccines and masking, offering opportunities to gather once again, and musicians and composers began to regain hope. Composers used this as inspiration to write music in anticipation of choirs reuniting once

again. These pieces were written with several different attitudes though with an overriding optimism.

Because this music was and is still very new, many pieces were not in circulation or even published. This presented a challenge when searching for material for this portion of the program. The American Choral Directors Association social media page was helpful in providing a list of composers and titles. From these responses, three of the four selections for this portion of the concert appeared on that list: *Bring a Song* by Christopher Fox, *Padayon* by Ily Matthew Maniano, and *We Sing* by Sherry Blevins. These selections were chosen based on the following criteria: voicing, accompaniment, text, overall atmosphere, and performance length. The texts varied from scripture to poetry and even from the composers' own hand. The fourth member of this section, *Abide with me*, while not written for or in response to the pandemic, was chosen to be an elegy to the innumerable lives lost to Covid-19.

## CHRISTOPHER FOX

Christopher Fox, born in 1975, received his Bachelor of Science in Music Education from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and his master's in education from The University of Loyola, Baltimore. He then served in the Theatre Department at the University of Mary Washington in Virginia. He is the current Director of Choruses at Glenelg High School in Howard County, Maryland and also serves as a guest conductor and clinician for choirs and educators throughout his surrounding area. Fox's works are

often commissioned by area honor choirs as well as by some university groups, including the choirs of Pennsylvania State University.<sup>38</sup>

## BRING A SONG

At the onset of pandemic lockdowns, the people of Italy were determined to continue making music in the midst of it all. From the windows of their own homes, people would sing and play music in hopes of brightening spirits. Music filled the streets once again. From these stories came the inspiration for Christopher Fox's *Bring a Song*.<sup>39</sup> In March of 2020, Fox penned the following text:

When our world is filled with darkness, uncertainty all around,  
We will join with one another and let our joy resound,  
Bring a song to your window, sing it loud for all to hear!  
Let our hope be victorious over fear.  
Lift your voice to your neighbor when it's all you have to give.  
Bring a song, share your heart so hope may live.

Let us focus less on sorrow, together as we sing.  
May the hope for each tomorrow rise in the song we bring.  
Bring a song to your window, sing it loud for all to hear!  
Let our hope be victorious over fear.  
Lift your voice to your neighbor when it's all you have to give.  
Bring a song, share your heart so hope may live.  
Hope will live.

Sing out! Bring a song to your window, sing your song!

Written mostly for younger groups, this piece is very approachable and of simple form. It is scored for soprano, alto, tenor, and bass with piano accompaniment. The piece opens with staggered entrances upon each repetition of the first eight measures. First enters

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<sup>38</sup> Christopher Fox, "Bio," WordPress, <https://christopherfoxmusic.com/about/>.

<sup>39</sup> Christopher Fox, *Bring A Song* (U.S.A.: Christopher Fox Music, 2020).

the piano, then soprano, then alto and tenor together, and finally the basses, all delivering the last line of text, “Sing out! Bring a song to your window, sing your song!” Upon the second stanza of text, Fox repeats the material with a few variations, often employing more counterpoint. The choir returns with the opening material and text, bringing the piece to its close on a hum.

### ILY MATTHEW MANIANO

One of the leading composers of the Philippines, Ily Matthew Maniano received his degree in music education from the University of the Philippines College of Music. He currently serves as the resident arranger and composer for the university’s choirs, the Philippine Madrigal Singers, Male Ensemble Philippines and the Manila Chamber Singers. He has also been a featured lecturer at choral clinics in the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Canada, Indonesia, and United Arab Emirates.<sup>40</sup>

### PADAYON

With only five words of text, this piece draws its beauty from the meaning behind the music and the music itself. Scored for soprano, alto, tenor, bass, and harp (piano was used for this performance), the work focuses on what lies beyond the pandemic. The Filipino text is by Joey Vargas and is as follows:

Lakad.	Walk.
Layag.	Sail.

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<sup>40</sup> Ily Matthew Maniano, “Ily Matthew Maniano, Composer, Arranger,” Ily Matthew Maniano, 2020, <https://www.ilymatthewmaniano.com/abo-ut>.

Lipad.	Fly.
Liyab.	Blaze.
Padayon	Continue

To better navigate the Filipino language, Maniano has included, in the inside cover, a pronunciation guide with IPA symbols and English phonetic equivalents. The first four words refer to the basic elements that create life: *Lakad*, to walk on earth; *Layag*, to traverse waters; *Lipad*, to fly in air; and *Liyab*, a blaze of fiery passion. The final word, *Padayon*, is pulled from the Visayan language which Ily encapsulates as, “All the hardships that we have encountered must – instead of serving as hindrances – compel us to carry on and continue.” This, to Maniano, is the ebb and flow pushing us forward through life.<sup>41</sup>

The sopranos and altos begin the piece with a very simple, unaccompanied melody. This builds as a trio, adding tenors, only expanding the texture a bit. It quickly funnels back to a unison alto note that bids the harp to enter, setting the compound meter with rolling sixteenth figures. The sopranos and altos repeat the opening melody and expand on it; tenors and basses then repeat the same material. The following measures are an over-pouring of polyphonic material with all voices involved. Duple figures pulled from the expanded material transcend across every part, starting from the altos up to the sopranos and back down towards the tenors until it once again funnels down to a unison C with sopranos and altos.

This brings the piece to its height, beginning with only six notes in the harp. Under this, a small group within the choir is instructed to speak the five words from the Filipino text, and translated into any other language with which they are familiar,

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<sup>41</sup> Ily Matthew Maniano, *Padayon* (Muziksea, 2020).

randomly and without rhythm. In the next measure, the tenors and basses enter, slowly building a cluster with all parts now divided. The altos, then sopranos, join in this moving cluster, very gradually building in range and volume; the random muttering text ceases. The whole time, the harp is also adding to the texture by playing aleatoric notes within a notated cluster, changing the chord cluster every few measures as the voices change theirs. This section reaches its apex with a massive chord. This includes all diatonic notes belonging to the C major sonority that has been in place throughout the piece. All voices and harp stop and there is a moment of silence. The harp restarts with the rolling sixteenth figures and the same opening material is restated with some new textures. The piece begins its closing with a reflective washing of chords singing, “Padayon” with an ever-present soprano pedal. By the end, each section fades out, leaving only the sopranos as if to walk on and “continue”.

#### RANDALL KEMPTON

Kempton received his Master of Music degree from Brigham Young University-Idaho and Doctor of Musical Arts from Arizona State University. He is currently the Director of Choral Activities and conductor of the Collegiate Singers as well as instructor for other vocal courses at Brigham Young University-Idaho, a position he has held since 1999. Prior to this, Kempton conducted various choirs at Brigham Young University, Arizona State University, and surrounding institutions throughout Utah.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> “Kempton, Randall,” BYU-Idaho. 2022. <https://www.byui.edu/music/about/faculty/kempton-randall>.

## ABIDE WITH ME

Setting the well-known and beloved music by William H. Monk and text by Henry F. Lyte, Kempton scores this for two tenors, two basses, and organ accompaniment. He has chosen to set the following three verses of the original five:

Abide with me, fast falls the eventide.  
The darkness deepens, Lord with me abide.  
When other helpers fail and comforts flee.  
Help of the helpless, Lord, abide with me.

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day.  
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away.  
Change and decay in all around I see;  
O thou who changest not, abide with me!

I need Thy presence ev[er]y passing hour.  
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's pow'r?  
Who, like thyself, my guide and stay can be?  
Thru cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me!

With the organ's solo entrance, the tune is not immediately apparent. Kempton uses extended, jazz-inspired chords, such as the recurring Fm(b5)/E-flat, throughout the piece. Kempton also employs two modulations, both of which are chromatic mediant going from E-flat to G-flat to A and finally to C. He places these modulations on the third line of stanza two, right on the beginning of the third stanza, and upon the third line of the third stanza. These devices bring great focus and weight to these portions of the text, and create a striking counterpart to the original hymn setting.



## SHERRY BLEVINS

Sherry Blevins studied music education at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro where she received her bachelor's degree. She then earned her master's degree in choral conducting from Appalachian State University, where she now serves as Supervisor of Student Teachers. Relatively new to composition, Blevins now writes for honor choirs across the southern corridor of the United States, applying her many years of teaching and conducting that has cultivated a clear understanding of choral music.<sup>43</sup> Her most recent accolade was winning Chorosynthesis' 2020 Call for Scores with *Illuminate the Night*, a piece journaling her battles with systemic lupus erythematosus.<sup>44</sup>

## WE SING

One of Sherry Blevins' most recent works, *We Sing* was written in 2020 amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the inscription reading: "for all of the singers and choral directors affected by Covid-19."<sup>45</sup> This is set for soprano, alto, tenor, bass, and piano. She has listed a few alternative scorings in certain sections of the piece such as an optional solo at the opening and treble chorus or descant at the end. This will be addressed later in this section. The text is by Blevins' own hand.

There once was a time when we stayed in the shadows  
There once was a time when we sang all alone.  
Voices enveloped in darkness. Voices longing for home.

There once was a time when the choir fell silent.  
Echoes of ancient voices filled the room.

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<sup>43</sup> Sherry Blevins, "About Sherry Blevins," Sherry Blevins, 2020, <https://www.sherryblevinismusic.com/about-sherry-blevins>.

<sup>44</sup> "Breaking the Silence," Chorosynthesis, 2020, <http://chorosynthesis.org/breakingthesilence>.

<sup>45</sup> Sherry Blevins, *We Sing* (Sherry Blevins, 2020).

We mourned in the hollow air, a melody of despair,  
and our hearts were broken because we couldn't share.  
Yet still... We would sing!

[Refrain]  
Sing of the beauty of music. Sing!  
Sing of the power of love.  
Sing of the things that matter; sing of things that are true.  
Just sing!

There once was a time when the pathway was narrow.  
When glimmers of light couldn't find their way in.  
But when hope appeared and you all were near,  
our hearts burst with joy to sing together again!  
So we sing!

[Refrain]  
So now is the time when our hearts are singing.  
Now is the time our hearts beat as one.  
And as the notes combine and your blends with mine,  
it feels like ev'ryone is coming home!  
So we sing!

[Refrain]  
There once was a time when our hearts were broken.  
We longed for the songs of many not the few.  
Still we believed there was a way.  
We're standing here today  
and now we know what we have to do!  
We will sing!

[Refrain]

The music is strophic with minor differences in each verse and refrain, adjusted for text. Opening the piece with flowing piano figures, Blevins starts with a solo line suggested for either unison sopranos and altos or simply a solo, delivering the first stanza of text. After this introduction, all voices combine to sing the second stanza. The music of

the refrain blooms with joyous spirit, reflective of the hopeful tone of the text. Each verse and refrain continues in the same manner.

In all the text, Blevins uses past tense in the verses, with forward-facing text in the refrains. It is not until the end of the last verse that she changes the tense and thus tone, creating a much more declamatory statement saying, “We will sing!” This affirmation is enhanced by an upward modulation from G major to A major. She also increases the texture by adding two descants, one soprano and one alto, above the ensemble. This calms down to a tenor and bass duet followed by a soprano and alto duet. The piece once again modulates higher, going to B, and the double descants return, ending the piece on the tonic chord proclaiming, “We sing!”

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