

SETTINGS OF SHORTER SACRED TEXTS IN ENGLISH BY SVEN-DAVID SANDSTRÖM

BY MARK MUNSON

Sven-David Sandström (1942-2019) was a prolific Swedish composer with hundreds of compositions to his credit. After the turn of the century his work was focused mostly on sacred choral music. Many of his choral works are modeled on those of great composers of the past. His *Matthäus-Passion*, 2011 [*St. Matthew Passion*] in German and *Ordet*, 2004 [*The Word*] in Swedish are large-scale passion settings modeled on J. S. Bach's *St. Matthew* and *St. John Passions*. His *Messiah* (2008) uses the same libretto compiled by Charles Jennens that Handel used in his prominent work. Regarding a series of motets in German completed in 2008, Sandström biographer Per F. Broman stated that, "it was just a matter of time before Sven-David Sandström would complete his motet cycle, set to the same texts as J. S. Bach's six *a cappella* compositions BWV 225-230."¹ *Five Pictures from the Bible* (2006) is an extended work approximately thirty minutes in duration for baritone soloist and unaccompanied choir whose movements set the stories of Jacob, Moses, Daniel, the Good Samaritan, and the Prodigal Son.

In addition to monumental choral works, Sandström composed many shorter, unaccompanied choral pieces, both sacred and secular. Some of them are in Latin, German, or English, but most are in Swedish. In 2008 Sandström began a three-year term as Composer-in-Residence at the Stockholm Cathedral and at the church of Hässelby Villastad where his goal was to compose a work for each of the sixty Sundays and celebrations of the church year for the Swedish Church. *Musik för kyrkoåret* [Music for the church year] is the 392-page volume that contains these pieces, most of which are also available in octavo form. From simpler settings for parish choirs to challenging compositions written with the Swedish Radio Choir in mind, Sandström's choral catalogue offers pieces with a wide range of difficulty levels.

The goal of this article is to present several of the unaccompanied pieces composed by Sandström that could be performed in concert by advanced choirs. The Swedish publisher *Gehrmans Musikförlag* lists 123

Photo by Elias Sjogren



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sacred and 21 secular pieces composed by Sandström in its catalogue. To highlight compositional techniques used in some of the more challenging pieces yet stay within the scope of a journal article, this discussion is focused on the seven sacred pieces written since 2000 whose texts are in English: *Psalm 139: O Lord, You Have Searched Me* (2004), *Four Songs of Love* (2008), *A New Song of Love* (2008), *The Lord's Prayer* (2009), *God Be Merciful: Psalm 67* (2010), *Vanity of Vanities* (2014), and *Psalm 27* (2016).

Some general characteristics of these pieces include:

1. Six-part SSATBB voicing (soprano, mezzo-soprano, alto, tenor, baritone, and bass) with much *divisi*,
2. Extended tertian harmony with major and minor thirds stacked in homophonic sections,
3. Identifiable tonal centers within sections of the pieces,
4. Seventh and ninth chords sometimes not resolving where expected,
5. Suspensions and passing tones used freely to create dissonance,
6. A variety of textures including:
 - a. antiphonal effects between the treble and bass clef voices
 - b. six-voice homophony, and
 - c. imitative polyphony using short, repeated, motivic, ostinato-like ideas,
7. Extreme vocal ranges in particularly dramatic portions of text,
8. Humming used as a tonal color,
9. Scores replete with accidentals, but with no key signatures,
10. A propensity for “flat keys,”
11. In some pieces, an idea is presented in the opening measures that becomes a recurring refrain.

Psalm 139: O Lord, You Have Searched Me

Approximately eight minutes in duration, this setting of the first twelve verses of *Psalm 139* can be viewed as a series of eight short, contrasting events.

1. *O Lord, you have searched me and you know me.*
2. *You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.*

You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. O Lord.

3. *Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord.*
4. *You hem me in behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. O Lord.*
5. *Such knowledge is too wonderful to me, too lofty for me to attain.*
6. *Where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?*
7. *If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.*
If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,
Even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.
8. *If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me and the light becomes night around me,”*
Even the darkness will not be dark to you;
The night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light for you.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_qC6uPXsSG4

Figure 1 shows the first event of the piece with its homophonic SSATBB texture along with the contrasting motion of the outer voices. Noting the use of dissonance and extended tertian harmony in these opening measures, one can get a sense of the composer’s harmonic language. The piece begins on a unison D4 before immediately moving to dissonance. The outer voices continue to expand to the second measure whose dissonance on the downbeat is caused by a 6-5 suspension that resolves to a brief resting place on G minor.

In the fifth measure we get a glimpse of the colorful seventh and ninth chords that are a hallmark of the composer’s harmonic language. The c_3^5 chord on the downbeat is followed by an EbM7 chord and a BbM9 in second inversion.

With the text “O Lord,” the first two measures become a unifying refrain that concludes the first four events of the piece, twice in exact repetition, once transposed, and once in a revoiced version. While the Psalmist had written the words “O Lord” only at the very beginning of the Psalm and in the fourth verse, Sandström has inserted them, and the refrain, into two additional places.

In the relatively lengthy fourth event, the composer uses his preferred six-voice texture to present two contrasting ideas, one sung by SSA, the other by TBB. In

pp **p** **pp** **mp**
 S O Lord, you have searched me and you know
 M-S O Lord, you have searched me and you know
 A O Lord, you have searched me and you know
 T O Lord, you have searched me and you know
 Bar O Lord, you have searched me and you know
 B O Lord, you have searched me and you know

 6 **pp** **p** **pp** **p** **pp**
 S me. O Lord, O Lord.
 M-S me. O Lord, O Lord.
 A me. O Lord, O Lord.
 T me. O Lord, O Lord.
 Bar me. O Lord, O Lord.
 B me. O Lord, O Lord.

Figure 1. Sven-David Sandström, *Psalm 139: O Lord, You Have Searched Me*, mm. 1–10.

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this case, the upper voices have quickly-moving, syncopated eighth and quarter notes while the lower voices begin the section with the slower chords in quarter and half notes. The singers are to begin this section quietly and perform a gradual *crescendo* that reaches a climax some twenty measures later (Figure 2).

Taken from the sixth event, Figure 3 on page 13 shows the sort of imitative polyphony that can be found in many of Sandström's works of this period. The voices enter in quick succession at the interval of the perfect fourth. In this example, once all of the voices have entered, the SSA and TBB parts are the same, only an octave apart. This section culminates in the climactic setting of the text, "where can I flee from your presence?" where the composer immediately moves to a homophonic texture, marked *fortissimo*, and has made use of agogic accent on the words "where," "flee," and "presence."

Sandström's use of extreme ranges and text painting immediately follows, setting the word "heavens" in the uppermost vocal ranges, and then in the following phrase, the word "depths" in the lowest (Figure 4 on page 14.) More colorful harmonies and chord progressions are present in this section, the height of which is the bright, first inversion F9 chord on the fermata of "heavens."

After moving through G minor and perhaps A and D minor as tonal centers, all in 4/4 time, the final, slower

section of the piece moves to Eb major with a 6/8 meter. This calm, contemplative, eighth event features relatively slow harmonic rhythm with the lower five voices in rather low vocal ranges accompanying melodic material sung by the first sopranos.

Four Songs of Love

This set of four pieces whose texts are selected verses from the *Song of Songs* is approximately nine minutes in duration. Similar to *Psalms 139*, there is colorful harmony and a preponderance of "flat keys," notably G minor, Bb minor, and Eb major.

1. Let him kiss me

Song of Songs 1:2, 15

Let him kiss me with kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine. Behold, thou art fair my love; thou hast doves' eyes.

<https://video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?fr=yhs-itm-001&hsimp=yhs-001&hspart=itm&p=sacred+songs+of+life+and+love+south+dakota+chorale+schmidt+pntatone#id=1&vid=dc-ca121036205ae9743a8852bd0daf38&action=click>

or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxZhtuPr7xU>

The musical score for Figure 2 is a choral setting of Psalm 139. It features six vocal parts: Soprano 1 (S1), Soprano 2 (S2), Alto (A), Tenor (T), Bass 1 (B1), and Bass 2 (B2). The score begins at measure 29, marked *sub. pp* and *cresc.*. The lyrics are: "You hem me, you hem me, you hem me in, you hem me in - be - hind, you hem me in - be - hind, me". The vocal lines are highly melodic and syncopated, while the bass parts provide a harmonic foundation with slower-moving chords.

Figure 2. Sven-David Sandström, *Psalms 139: O Lord, You Have Searched Me*, mm. 29–32.

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7 $\text{♩} = 144$

pp cresc.

S Where can I go from your spi - rit, from your spi - rit, from your

M-S *pp cresc.* Where can I go from your spi - rit, from your spi - rit, from your spi -

A *pp cresc.* Where can I go from your spi - rit, from your spi - rit, from your spi -

T *pp cresc.* Where can I go, where can I go from your spi - rit, from your spi - rit, from your

Bar *pp cresc.* Where can I go, where can I go from your spi - rit, from your spi - rit, from your spi -

B *pp cresc.* Where can I go, where can I go from your spi - rit, from your spi - rit, from your spi -

66 (*cresc.*) *ff*

S spi - rit? Where can I flee, can I flee from your pre - - sence?

M-S (*cresc.*) *ff* - rit? Where can I flee, can I flee from your pre - - sence?

A (*cresc.*) *ff* - rit? Where can I flee, can I flee from your pre - - sence?

T (*cresc.*) *ff* spi - rit? Where can I flee, can I flee from your pre - - sence?

Bar (*cresc.*) *ff* - rit? Where can I flee, can I flee from your pre - - sence?

B (*cresc.*) *ff* - rit? Where can I flee, can I flee from your pre - - sence?

Figure 3. Sven-David Sandström, *Psalm 139: O Lord, You Have Searched Me*, mm. 62–71.

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As if narrated by a woman, the SSA voices carry the text at the beginning of the piece with three phrases, each beginning on unison D4 before the outer voices expand in contrary motion. Throughout the first half of this piece, the TBB voices merely hum or sing a neutral “ah” vowel, filling out G minor, Bb7, and Eb major chords. A harmony used frequently by Sandström and referred to by Joshua Bronfman as the “S-chord” includes the root, a fifth above the root, and a minor second above the fifth.² This harmony, in inversion, occurs on the word “kiss” in each of the opening three phrases. A sonority that Sandström frequently uses at the apex of passionate phrases consisting of a major-minor seventh chord with a sixth-five suspension occurs in measures 10 and 11 (Figure 5).

Halfway through the piece the roles are reversed and the TBB voices carry the text, answering the SSA voices with a climactic phrase that leads to a quiet ending of humming on Eb major.

2. Until the Daybreak

Song of Songs 2:17

Until the daybreak, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bethor.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-CYd4udVio>

The TB voices quietly begin this movement with homophonic texture in Bb minor, setting the background for the treble voices, shown in Figure 6 on page 16, to imitatively present a short motive of 16th and 8th notes. This motive is repeated, leading to a climactic point where the composer uses text painting to set the words “flee away,” just thirteen measures into the piece.

The lower voices begin the following phrase quietly and then *crescendo* to climactically deliver the text “upon the mountains of Bethor.” The piece is then immediately quiet with the treble voices singing material similar to that at the beginning of the movement. The trebles join the lower voices in quiet vocal tremolo humming to end the movement on E^b major.

3. Awake, O North Wind

Song of Songs 4:16

Awake, o north wind; and come thou south; blow upon my garden that spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cip-rGFtlt8>

As if summoning the wind, the dynamic in the first four measures quickly crescendos from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo* with each voice, in turn, commanding “awake.” A shift in meter from 4/4 to 6/8 at the top of crescendo is

The image shows a musical score for three vocal parts: Soprano 1 (S1), Soprano 2 (S2), and Alto (A). The lyrics are: "Let him kiss me with kisses of his mouth: for thy love,—" The score includes dynamic markings: *p* (piano) at the start, *f* (forte) in the middle, and *mf* (mezzo-forte) at the end. There are also crescendo and decrescendo hairpins. The music is in G minor, with a key signature of two flats. The time signature is 4/4.

Figure 5. Sven-David Sandström, *Four Songs of Love: Let him kiss me*, mm. 7–12.

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followed by a descent in both pitch and dynamic (Figure 7 on page 17).

Throughout the movement there is an emphasis on short *crescendo-decrescendo* gestures whether they be on the word “blow” set on a single, isolated eighth note, or, for example, on “blow upon my garden” set on several eighth or sixteenth notes. This imitation of the wind coming and going is imposed upon Sandström’s characteristic harmonies and the antiphonal texture that frequently contrasts the three upper voices working as a unit with the lower three voices. At 108 beats per minute, this movement moves faster than the others in the set.

4. His Left Hand

Song of Songs 8:3

His left hand shall be under my head and his right hand shall embrace me.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-CYd4udVio>

This slow-moving, reflective piece consists of three long phrases. The characteristic SSA/TTB antiphonal texture of the first two phrases leads to the climactic third phrase where, with increasing tension on the word “embrace,” a twelve-part G7 chord with an added D# in the top tenor and soprano parts, move in resolution to a C major chord before falling motion brings the move-

ment quietly to its close.

A New Song of Love

Song of Songs 2:10-12, 2:16-17

My beloved speaks and says to me: arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for now the winter is gone, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on earth; the time of singing has come and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.

My beloved is mine and I am his; he pastures his flock among the lilies. Until the day breathes and shadows flee, turn away, my beloved, be like a gazelle or a young stag on the cleft mountains.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FBi0_bWd8M

The thick, rich, colorful harmonies that are often delivered by *divisi* greater than the composer’s six-voice template are to be found aplenty in this setting. A special feature of this four-minute piece deals with the distribution of the text. Speaking as the narrator, the treble voices begin in the first measure with the opening text: “My beloved speaks and says to me.” The TBB voices respond “arise, my love, my fair one, and come away,” and then continue to complete the eleventh and twelfth verses of the poetry. Meanwhile, the treble voices sing the sixteenth and seventeenth verses of text, beginning with “My beloved is mine.” The two texts are not sung

The image shows a musical score for three voices: Soprano 1 (S1), Soprano 2 (S2), and Alto (A). The score is for measures 12-14. The lyrics are: "un - til the day - break and the sha - dows flee a - way,". The dynamics are marked as *mp* (mezzo-piano), *f* (forte), and *ppp* (pianissimo). The music is in a minor key and features a complex, antiphonal texture.

Figure 6. Sven-David Sandström, *Four Songs of Love: Until the Daybreak*, mm. 12–14.

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♩ = 108

pp cresc. *ff*

S A - wake, a - wake, a - wake, O

M-S A - wake, a - wake, a - wake, O

A A - wake, a - wake, a - wake, O

T A - wake, a - wake, a - wake, O north

Bar A - wake, a - wake, a - wake, O north

B A - wake, a - wake, a - wake, O north

5 *dim.*

S north wind; and come thou south, thou south;

M-S north wind; and come thou south, thou south;

A north wind; and come thou south, thou south;

T wind; and come thou south;

Bar wind; and come thou south;

B wind; and come thou south;

♩ = 108

Figure 7. Sven-David Sandström, Four Songs of Love: Awake, O North Wind, mm. 1–10.
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simultaneously, but rather alternate, with the group not singing text providing accompaniment with humming. The rather quiet dialogue that opens the piece gives way to a *crescendo* and *accelerando* that lead to a highpoint as the treble voices sing “turn away, my beloved.” Several measures of falling action follow, taking the piece to a quiet, humming close, this time on Gb major.

The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Sandström’s setting of this most familiar text consists of seventy-seven measures and is just a little over three minutes in duration. The piece has a simple structure of

ABACAD with the opening eleven measures on the text “Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name” serving as a refrain.

As is the case for most of this piece, the texture of the refrain is homophonic with *divisi* beyond the composer’s basic six-part voicing. Opening on Ab major, the second measure has a colorful D7 chord which, rather than resolving where one might expect, moves to a C minor chord. The phrase then moves along to a high point on a Db major chord on the word “hallowed” before finding its way to resolution on E^b major (Figure 8).

The intervening sections proceed in much the same homophonic style. Using pitches high in the vocal ranges, the composer highlights the word “heaven” at the pinnacle of the B section and by contrast, writes in lower ranges at the beginning of the D section whose text deals with temptation and evil.

After the quiet beginning of the D section on “lead us not into temptation,” a long *crescendo* begins on the text “for thine is the Kingdom...” where we find the same harmonic progression as is used in the refrain. The word

Figure 8. Sven-David Sandström, *The Lord’s Prayer*; mm. 1–11.

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ing nineteen measures, it ends with a string of descending first inversion major, minor, and diminished chords before resolving on E as shown in Figure 10.

The third and fourth layered events, both with their own, new melodic patterns, are similar in character to the first two layered events but are not delineated from each other with any sort of cadential material. Both in A major, the transition between these third and fourth events is a smooth segue. There is a brief modulation to B major for the fifth event, whose patterns are similar to those of the fourth. The fifth event ends with descending material, much as is found in Figure 10, before moving to a slower, reflective closing section of the piece.

3. *The sun also ariseth and the sun goeth down and hasteth to his place where he arose.*
4. *The wind goeth toward the south and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits.*
5. *All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full: unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.*
6. *All things are full of labor; man cannot utter it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.*
7. *The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be, and that which is done is that which shall be done, and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything whereof it may be said: see this is new? It hath been already of old time, which was before us.*

Vanity of Vanities

Ecclesiastes 1: 2-11

With its skeptical text, Sandström's setting of an excerpt from the first chapter of Ecclesiastes is generally slow moving and is approximately eight minutes in duration. Similar to his setting of *Psalms 139*, the composer sets this text in a series of contrasting events, this time eight, most of which conclude with a "vanity of vanities" refrain that is presented in the opening measures.

*Refrain: Vanity of vanities,
saith the Preacher, vanity of
vanities, all is vanity.*

1. *What profit hath a man of
all his labor which he taketh
under the sun?*
2. *One generation passeth
away and another genera-
tion cometh,
but the earth abideth forever.*

The musical score consists of six staves, each representing a different voice part: Soprano (S), Mezzo-Soprano (M-S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), Baritone (B), and Bass (Bar). The music is written in 4/4 time and G major. Each staff begins with a dynamic marking of *ff* (fortissimo) and ends with *pp* (pianissimo). The lyrics are: "praise, praise thee, praise thee, praise thee." The score shows the vocal lines for measures 71 through 74.

Figure 10. Sven-David Sandström, *God Be Merciful: Psalm 67*, mm. 71–74.
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8. *There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.*

The opening three measures are sung by the treble voices and anticipate the five-measure refrain that follows, sung by all voices. Although the *divisi* goes beyond the composer's normal six-part voicing, the bass clef voices double the trebles at the octave. The refrain is constructed on a descending Bb harmonic minor scale with Gb enharmonically spelled as F#. All voices commence on middle range Bb before some move down the scale. Cluster-like effects occur when as many as six voices at a time move in their stepwise descent. The dissonant-filled refrain ends with three treble solo voices humming a third inversion F7 chord notated at the top of the treble

clef (Figure 11).

The "Vanity Refrain" is repeated in Bb minor at the end of the first event; in a truncated version in B minor at the end of the third event; and at the end of the sixth event in G minor. A full iteration of it transposed up a fourth to Eb minor at the end of the seventh event makes for quite a climactic moment as the sopranos, tenors, and baritones sing full voice in the upper ranges of their voices. Pitched a major ninth lower than the original, three iterations of a two-measure phrase reminiscent of the refrain quietly end the piece.

The eight events that carry most of the text display a variety of textures. In the first and seventh events, one vocal part carries melodic material while the others sing accompanying material in slower notes. For example, in the first event, beginning in measure nine, the first sopra-

The musical score for measures 4-8 of 'Vanity of Vanities' is presented for six voices: Soprano (S), Mezzo-Soprano (M-S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), Baritone (Bar), and Bass (B). The lyrics are: "Van - i - ty of van - i - ties; all is van - - i - ty." The score features dynamic markings of *pp* and *f*, and includes performance instructions such as *Solo* and *mm*. There are also numerical markings like '3' indicating triplets. The notation includes various clefs, accidentals, and phrasing slurs.

Figure 11. Sven-David Sandström, *Vanity of Vanities*, mm. 4–8.

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nos sing the melody while the other voices harmonize on Eb minor as shown in Figure 12. In the seventh event (m. 58) it is the tenors who sing the melody while the other voices provide support on C minor.

An especially interesting event begins in measure 34 with the text “the wind goeth toward the south...” Composed in what appears to be Lydian mode on E, each of the treble voices enter imitating both the preceding vocal entrance and the wind “whirling about” while the tenor and bass voices provide harmonic support as they hum pitches (Figure 13 on page 23).

In the fifth event, the TBB voices enter imitatively and have a fast *crescendo* to the word “full” pitched at the top of their vocal ranges to sing about rivers running into the sea. It is the SSA voices that provide the hummed accompaniment here, touching on pitches that are extremely low in their ranges (Figure 14 on page 24).

While there are glorious ascending melodic lines, such as is found on the text “the sun also ariseth,” descending lines dominate this rather dark piece. As shown

in Figure 15 on page 24, the sixth event begins with the tenors and basses rhythmically stabilizing the harmony in A minor while the treble voices proceed downward, primarily by step. Figure 15 also shows the composer’s use of dissonance through nonharmonic tones and syn-copated rhythm in a descending line.

Psalm 27

The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid? When evil men advance against me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall.

At forty-eight beats per minute, a performance of this thirty-measure setting of Psalm 27: 1-2 is approximately two and a half minutes in duration. Similar to *Vanity of Vanities*, the composer uses a recurring, descending scale pattern, this time on Ab major, to begin the piece. The

Figure 12. Sven-David Sandström, *Vanity of Vanities*, mm. 9–12.

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accel. poco a poco
pp cresc. poco a poco

34

S The wind goeth toward the south and turn-eth a - bout in - to the

M-S The wind goeth toward the south and turn-eth a -

A The wind goeth toward the south

T *pp* *p* *mp*
 m

Bar *p* *mp*
 m

B *mp*
 m

36 (*cresc.*)

S north it whirl-eth a - bout, it whirl-eth a - bout, it whirl-eth a -

M-S (*cresc.*) bout in - to the north it whirl-eth a - bout, it whirl-eth a -

A (*cresc.*) and turn-eth a - bout in - to the north it whirl-eth a -

T

Bar

B

Figure 13. Sven-David Sandström, *Vanity of Vanities*, mm. 34–37.

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colorful dominant seventh sonority at the apex of this phrase (m. 4) resolves to tonic Ab major. Accounting for half of the measures in the piece, this opening phrase recurs two times – in measures 10-14 and again in 15-30, the final time with rhythmic augmentation (Figure

16 on page 25).

With a structure of ABAB'CA, the C section contains the climax prepared on the text “when evil men advance against me to devour my flesh” in one of the composer’s typical manners: low tessituras moving to high, *pianissimo*

Figure 14 shows the Tenor (T) and Bass (B) parts of the musical score for measures 41-43. The Tenor part is written in treble clef and the Bass part in bass clef. The lyrics are: "All the ri-vers run in-to the in-to the sea, yet the sea is not full; un-to the". The score includes dynamic markings: *pp* (pianissimo) at the start of each line, *p* (piano) in the middle, and *f* (forte) at the end. There are also slurs and accents over the notes.

Figure 14. Sven-David Sandström, *Vanity of Vanities*, mm. 41–43.

Tenor and Bass Parts

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Figure 15 shows the Soprano (S), Mezzo-Soprano (M-S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B) parts of the musical score for measures 46-47. The Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, and Alto parts are written in treble clef, and the Tenor and Bass parts in bass clef. The lyrics are: "All things are full of la - bor man". The score includes dynamic markings: *pp* (pianissimo) at the start and end of each line. There are also slurs and accents over the notes. A tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 48$ is present at the beginning.

Figure 15. Sven-David Sandström, *Vanity of Vanities*, mm. 46–47.

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$\text{♩} = 48$ *pp* *f* *poco rit.*

S The Lord is my light and my sal -

M-S The Lord is my light and my sal -

A The Lord is my light and my sal -

T The Lord is my light and my sal -

Bar The Lord is my light and my sal -

B The Lord is my light and my sal -

a tempo

5 *p* *pp* *mp* *ppp*

S va - tion whom shall I fear? Mm mm mm

M-S va - tion whom shall I fear? Mm mm mm

A va - tion whom shall I fear? Mm mm mm

T va - tion whom shall I fear? Mm mm mm

Bar va - tion whom shall I fear? Mm mm mm

B va - tion whom shall I fear? Mm mm mm

Figure 16. Sven-David Sandström, *Psalm 27*, mm. 1 – 9.

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to *fortissimo*, and an *accelerando* from 48 to 96 beats per minute, all within three measures. The denouement is immediately quiet, but still has quickly-moving notes. The slower tempo returns for the closing A section.

Sandström's Earlier Settings of Sacred Texts in English

Hear My Prayer, O Lord is Sandström's other shorter sacred piece in English listed in the Gehrmans catalogue. Published in 1986, its style is quite different from those written after the turn of the century. Somewhat longer than five minutes in duration, the first third of the piece is Henry Purcell's eight-voice setting of Psalm 102:1. Sandström's original work melds into Purcell's, maintains the SSAATTBB texture through intense dissonance, and finally resolves peacefully on C major.

En ny himmel och en ny jord [A new heaven and a new earth] was published in 1982 with an English version printed beneath the Swedish. The rich tonal language is similar to that of the later sacred pieces but also includes chord clusters. Although the voicing is six-part, the composer does not use the treble and bass clef voices as two separate units as he did in the later years. Rather, much of the piece is homophonic with *divisi* yielding as many as twelve parts.

Conclusion

While living and teaching in Sweden during the 2005-06 academic year, I had the opportunity to hear the dress rehearsal and premiere of *Ordet* performed by the Swedish Radio Choir and Orchestra. I was especially drawn to Sandström's colorful harmonic language in

Discography

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Mona Ehntorp and Gustaf Sjökvist; Hässelby Motettkör, Gustaf Sjökvist Kammarkör, and Storkyrkans Kör; *Sven-David Sandström: Musik för Kyrkoåret* [Music for the Church Year], Ladybird, 2012, Naxos
(*The Lord's Prayer*)

the piece. A few years later, Per Broman, my Swedish music theory colleague and Sandström biographer, invited the composer to spend a few days on our campus. In preparation for the visit, the A Cappella Choir and I prepared his *Psalm 139: O Lord, You Have Searched Me*. Soon after that, I had the opportunity to commission and premiere his *Vanity of Vanities*. These pieces really stretched the A Cappella Choir, the majority of whom are college freshmen. The extended harmonies and *divisi* presented the biggest challenges. I found that the clearly-delineated sections of both pieces made it relatively easy to plan and execute rehearsals after the notes had been learned in sectional rehearsals.

The pieces discussed in this article are challenging, but successful and satisfying performances are achievable by proficient choirs of skilled singers. The colorful harmonies, creative contrasting events, and intense climactic moments are appealing to performers and audience members alike. Some of the composer's simpler pieces, many of which were composed for use in the Swedish Church, could be approached and successfully

performed by singers possessing more modest skills. For example, *Gläd dig och jubla* [Rejoice and Shout,] a piece for Palm Sunday that employs the composer's characteristic harmonic language and some of his compositional techniques, is scored for SAB and can come together quite easily. ■

NOTES

- ¹ Per F. Broman, "Es ist vollbracht: Sven-David Sandström's Six Motets," *Nordic Highlights*, January, 2009, 5.
- ² Joshua Bronfman, "Sven-David Sandström's *Five Pictures from the Bible*: Historical Precedents, Development, and Analysis" PhD diss., Florida State University, Tallahassee, 2010, 45.
- ³ James Kallembach, "Sven-David Sandström's *Messiah*: A Career of Writing for the Voice, Part 1: An Introduction to the Music of Sven-David Sandström," *Choral Journal* 51/4 (October 2010), 24.

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