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CHORAL JOURNAL

December 2020

Just In Case You've Forgotten:

A Focus Issue
On Black Composition And Arranging

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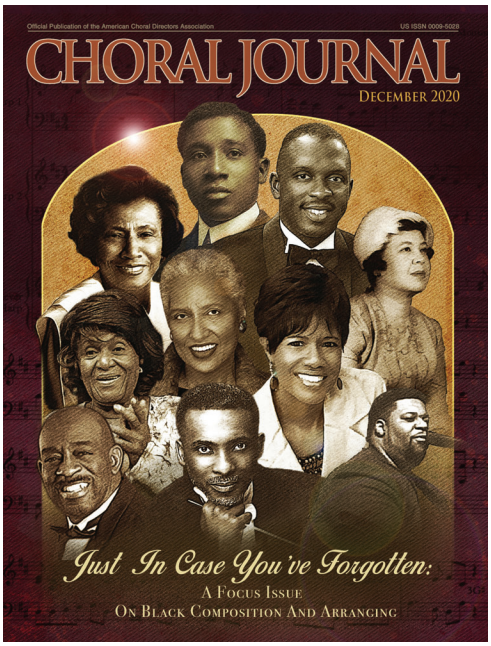
CONTENTS

December 2020/Volume 61, Number 5



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ADVOCACY STATEMENT

Whereas the human spirit is elevated to a broader understanding of itself through study and performance in the aesthetic arts; and

Whereas serious cutbacks in funding and support have steadily eroded state institutions and their programs throughout the country;

Be it resolved that all citizens of the United States of America actively voice affirmative and collective support for necessary funding at the local, state, and national levels of education and government to ensure the survival of arts programs for this and future generations.

From the EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Tim Sharp

"How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard..."

These are the words of Winnie the Pooh (A.A. Milne), and I know exactly how the little bear feels. Over the last thirteen years, I have enjoyed the best job in the world, traveling to all fifty United States and to six of the seven continents as I worked to advance the mission of the American Choral Directors Association. This work has allowed me to observe and learn from the best of the best in every area of choral scholarship and research, education and pedagogy, rehearsal and performance, composition and arranging, mentoring and collaboration, and advocacy and innovation.

I have often said that one of the best perks of this job has been the opportunity to work with and observe my colleagues on a daily basis. As I sign off from this monthly column of communication with our ACDA membership, I would like to share what I have observed from all of you during the course of my travel and observations. The following list of virtues represents what I have found to inhabit the best of us. These are traits of the choral directors that were your mentors and heroes, and the virtues that will create the next generation of mentors and heroes in our field. I leave them with you to ponder and as an aspirational dashboard as we continue our work of inspiring excellence in choral music education, performance, composition, and advocacy:

Passion/Enthusiasm
Compassion/Friendship/Encouragement
Knowledge/Wisdom
Confidence/Authority/Sincerity
Self-Discipline/Hard Work/Patience
Intelligence/Memory
Honesty/Loyalty/Friendship
Seriousness/Gravity/Responsibility/High-Mindedness
Humility/Courage/Resignation
Perseverance/Resilience/Endurance
Faith

These are the virtues I have seen in the best of us. As I leave my position happy and healthy, I look forward to refining these virtues in my personal Act III. Lead On!

From the INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Hilary Apfelstadt

In the interim… Meanwhile… Temporarily …

Google to the rescue. Out of curiosity, I looked up synonyms for "interim" since it is part of my ACDA identity now: "Interim Executive Director." It surprised me that so many were negative: e.g. the intervening time is described, among other things, as "a hiccup," "discontinuity," "gap," "interruption," "let-up," "time out," and a "pause in the action." To me, these definitions imply a lack of action. On the other hand, "interim" can imply a bridge of sorts, something in between, linking two things through action. In ACDA's case, we are in a time of transition between Tim Sharp's period of visionary leadership, during which our visibility grew tremendously, particularly in international circles, and the leadership of our as-yet-unknown next Executive Director.

One of my tasks is to help drive the search for future leadership and that will involve, among other things, gleaning ideas from elected leaders as well as from membership who wish to share their thoughts. I am engaging in that process now and welcome communication from anyone in the membership who would like to contact me. Please use my email at hapfelstadt@acda.org Thank you. We will likely seek outside counsel as well. What will ACDA look like in the future? What will we carry forward from the past decade or so? What will change in response to our changing environment?

Covid-19 has transformed the world, as we know it. Because of the frightening health implications, it has changed the way we function in education, in the arts, in our everyday life. Yet in many ways it has shown how flexible we are. The proliferation of webinars and Zoom gatherings, with multiple resources, has shown us that we are united in our quest to keep the arts alive and relevant. Coupled with our renewed commitment to social justice, we have been remarkably productive during this pandemic.

I am energized by the conversations around ways to be more inclusive, to broaden the definition of "musical excellence" to acknowledge the excellent work so many people are doing in our communities to make the arts accessible to everyone, even in these challenging times.

Our Diversity Survey will help us not only see where things stand at present in ACDA, but more important, also help us plan our future path. How CAN we be more representative of the society we live in? How can we connect with multiple communities? How can we identify and honor the people who are doing remarkable work with underserved populations?

As much as we all suffer from Zoom fatigue at times, we know Zoom has enabled us to widen our circle. I have visited classrooms from coast to coast in the U.S. and some in Canada as well. How easy it is to connect with composers and conductors who can share insights into their work. As a teacher, I would want to continue some of that online component in the future. I do not believe that virtual choirs are a substitute for face-to-face and real-time singing; that is simply irreplaceable. But we can still work on musical skills and create some kind of community when we share common goals and connect on-line. I have been inspired by stories of what people are doing to dig deeper into fewer pieces of music this term, and to explore them in great detail from multiple angles. That experience can be profoundly enriching.

I salute the many composers who have responded to this time by writing music that reflects our concerns around current events. This is another lesson learned as we rethink repertoire choices for the future: cast a wider net. Looking for repertoire that represents who we are and who we need to be will challenge us in new but worthwhile ways. Abandoning the Western European canon does not allow us to acknowledge the richness of that repertoire; we can continue to look there, but we must also look to musics of other cultures and of new voices. Start locally—what is in your immediate environment? Where do you live? What cultures do your people represent? What is it about your region that deserves to be celebrated or acknowledged?

Back to the bridge—what else is on my "interim" plate? Immediate concerns include:

- Supporting conference planning that involved switching from live to online format, a huge task that the steering committee has embraced with unmatched fervor and energy;

- Getting to know the leadership at state, regional, and national levels through a series of Zoom gatherings;

From the **INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

(continued from previous page)

- Engaging in membership initiatives especially with student chapters, which represent the future of ACDA;
- Learning about how the various passions of ACDA Standing Committees enrich the organization;
- Understanding the financial structure of ACDA;
- Communicating with the Executive Committee and National Board who engage on a regular basis with our missions and goals.

This interim period is more than a "keep the place afloat" time. If we remain static, we cannot move forward, and not moving forward in this fraught time is not healthy for any organization. I intend to work actively to cross that bridge until we have a new leader in place, and with the help of our elected officers and national office staff, to be able to hand over a healthy ACDA to the next Executive Director. Thank you for your patience as we make crucial decisions about the future of ACDA.

Hilary Apfelstadt

From the **PRESIDENT**

Lynne Gackle

At the Leadership Conference in June of 2019, Past-Eastern Region President, Peggy Dettwiler, proposed to the Executive Committee (EC) two new purposes for consideration by the membership to potentially be added to the 12 exiting core purposes of ACDA. This past June, the ACDA National Board formally reviewed and discussed the two proposed purposes and agreed that the EC would complete the finalization of the two statements before bringing them to the national membership for final adoption. The National Board has recently approved the final version of these two proposed purposes. They are:

13. To foster and promote choral singing in the pursuit of peace and justice that enhances social and emotional well-being.

14. To foster and promote diversity and inclusivity through active engagement with underrepresented choral musicians and potential choral participants.

The first 10 (original) purposes of ACDA were created in February 1959:

- To foster and promote the finest types of choral music to make these experiences possible.
- To foster and encourage rehearsal procedures conducive to attaining the highest possible level of musicianship and artistic performance.
- To foster and promote the organization and development of choral groups of all types in schools and colleges.

- To foster and promote the development of choral music in the church and synagogue.
- To foster and promote the organization and development of choral societies in cities and communities.
- To foster and promote understanding of choral music as an important medium of contemporary artistic expression.
- To foster and promote significant research in the field of choral music.
- To foster and encourage choral composition of superior quality.
- To cooperate with all organizations dedicated to the development of musical culture in America.

In 1975, two more purposes were added by Constitution and Bylaw revision.

- To foster and promote international exchange programs involving performing groups, conductors, and composers.
- To disseminate professional news and information about choral music.

In January 2021, the national membership will vote on the acceptance of the two new purposes stated above. This will be the first change to be made in 46 years.

It is important to be aware of the history as well as the importance of this upcoming national vote. I do not find it coincidental that during this season, which, for centuries, has been synonymous with peace and goodwill to each and every person, we ponder these purposes for acceptance by ACDA. Many would agree that these statements are long overdue. Perhaps others might argue that these ideas are to be "understood," not needing further definition. Undoubtedly, among the many attributes of choral music, choral singing most definitely fosters and promotes the pursuit of peace, justice for ALL, and should most especially do so for those who have been historically underrepresented. It is my wish and, indeed, my prayer, that at the close of the year 2020, choral music will enhance your well-being in every way. May its gift continue to bless you in 2021 and each day that follows!

NATIONAL OFFICERS

From the EDITOR

Amanda Bumgarner

Brandon Boyd

Welcome to the final *Choral Journal* issue of 2020. In November, I celebrated my seventh anniversary as ACDA Publications Editor. Certainly, it has been a year unlike any other, and I sincerely hope that the past twelve issues of *Choral Journal* have, in some small way, inspired and encouraged you in your choral work.

From the Guest Editor

This December issue is Part 2 of two focus issues ranging from Black history, composers, arrangers, and compositions. This month we are paying tribute to the Negro spiritual through the contributions of four Black composers and arrangers and their music.

The title of this month's journal is borrowed from Thomas Whitfield's song, "In Case You've Forgotten." Brandon Waddles discusses both a historical and analytical survey of Whitfield's life and work, and how the Whitfield Company helped define the Gospel "sound" in discussing his use of technique, attention to detail, and precision in leading Gospel choirs.

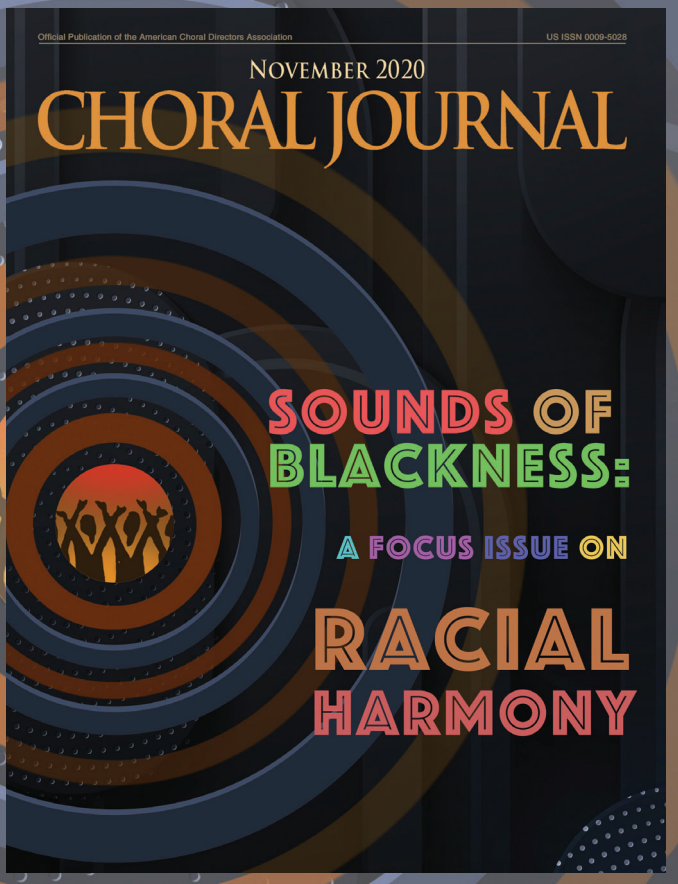
Moses Hogan's spiritual arrangements are some of the most well-crafted folk arrangements of all time. His use of contemporary elements in arranging inspired many of the contemporary choral arrangers we know today and will continue to have a lasting impact for years to come. "His Light Still Shines" offers performance practice considerations as well as a visual model for Moses Hogan's artistic style.

Jason Max Ferdinand's article highlights R. Nathaniel Dett's *Chariot Jubilee,* thought to be the first-ever symphonic work based solely on Negro spirituals. *The Chariot Jubilee* was commissioned in 1919 by Howard Lyman and the Syracuse University Chorus. The piece has had limited performance, but with historical and analytical insight from Ferdinand's latest edition, conductors can perform this critical work and others with a new understanding of how we can foster racial harmony and bridge societal gaps through meaningful repertoire. Carlton Kilpatrick's article focuses on André J. Thomas' *Mass: A Celebration of Love and Joy,* premiered in 2019 by the Tallahassee Community Chorus, accompanied by University of Missouri's Philharmonic Orchestra.

It has been an absolute pleasure working with the *Choral Journal* editorial staff to make these two journals possible. I am even more delighted to have had the chance to share the scholarship and music of some of America's top scholars and researchers who have a special interest in the music of the Black tradition. As we all move forward, I hope these articles serve as resources for you and the profession for many years to come.

Brandon A. Boyd, University of Missouri School of Music
Assistant Director of Choral Activities &
Assistant Professor of Choral Music Education

Don't miss Part One of this focus in the November 2020 issue of *Choral Journal*, guest edited by Brandon Boyd. He writes in his guest editor's column: "Part 1 specifically highlights concerns related to racial inequality in and outside of the choral classroom, focusing on ways to build racial harmony, understanding the depth of classical Black repertoire, and discussing traces of racism in the music of the Spanish Baroque Era."



A Pedagogy for Living: Applying Restorative, Anti-Racist Pedagogy in the Choral Classroom by Jason A. Dungee

Unaccompanied Non-Idiomatic Choral Music of Black Composers by Marques L. A. Garrett

Black in the Baroque: Racism in the Spanish *Villancico de negro* by Tyrone Clinton, Jr.

Choral Reviews featuring compositions by Black composers

THE WHITFIELD SOUND

UNEARTHING FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS OF CONTEMPORARY GOSPEL MUSIC

BRANDON CHRISTIAN WADDLES

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Toward the latter half of the twentieth century there was a focal shift in the gospel music scene. The city of Detroit, a major transportation hub during the Great Migration along with Chicago, the birthplace of Black gospel music, produced a new crop of gospel musicians with fresh ideas. Rev. Charles Craig, Rev. James Cleveland, Rev. Charles Nicks, and Dr. Mattie Moss Clark were chief among those who helped to create the sophisticated sound of gospel music that Detroit became known for, compared to the more visceral utterings of Chicago's home-grown traditional style.

Thomas Whitfield (1954-1992), a Detroit native, was born and reared during the height of this new era of classic gospel music. What he heard and experienced inside and outside of the church inspired him to foster a style of gospel music that would permeate the scene and redefine the genre in myriad ways, including harmony, compositional structure, and textual significance. The sound Whitfield forged in the last two decades of his life is the predominant aural aesthetic of contemporary gospel music.

The defining features of the Whitfield Sound are as follows: 1) the redefining of the choral sound in gospel music; 2) the blending of gospel, jazz, and classicism; 3) the creation of orchestral textures in gospel music; and 4) the deepening of intimacy in gospel song lyrics. From a musical standpoint, sophistication and elegance lies at the foundation of Whitfield's writing. From a spiritual standpoint, the message within his music was unadulterated in its intent and presentation. The Whitfield Sound is the sonic bridge between the gospel music of past and present.

Redefining the Choral Sound

Donald Lawrence, when asked how he would define the Whitfield Sound, described the style in terms of a kind of "Gothic Catholicism." He wrote that it exuded an "almost medieval choir overtone."[1] Lawrence's inclusion of the choral aspect within the style exemplifies how integral Whitfield's flagship ensemble, his Company, was to the development of the Whitfield Sound. Whitfield trained the choir to access the detail and precision of smaller ensembles, allowing the group to attain more complex harmonies in their singing than had previously been achieved in gospel music. Even so, the Company—nearly fifty strong—never lost the warm strength of sound. Dr. Tony McNeill said this about the Whitfield Company Sound:

> It is a versatile, rich, full-bodied, balanced choral tone that is motivated by a unique, bold confidence and dexterity normally found in a solo voice but mastered by an ensemble. The Whitfield Company is probably one of the most musically malleable gospel choirs ever.[2]

McNeill's sentiments echo the strivings of a number of gospel ensembles that formed in the '80s and '90s, influenced by the Whitfield Company. These include Lawrence's Tri-City Singers, Kurt Carr & the Kurt Carr Singers, Kirk Franklin & Family, and James Hall & Worship & Praise. Thomas Whitfield and his Company created the sound to be emulated among choral ensembles in contemporary gospel music.

Since its inception, the Whitfield Company has boasted some of the most accomplished musical talents Detroit had to offer. Donna Harris stated that Whitfield found the moniker "Company" to be imperative because it invited the "varied and diverse gifts" of the members into a "collaborative" and "inclusive" space.[3] Due to the heightened musical acumen of the singers, Whitfield was able to imbue his creative vision in ways that were previously inaccessible to him. The Company, therefore, was the foremost aural emblem of the Whitfield Sound.

One of the major draws of the Company was its ability to sing what Lawrence refers to as "unavailable tension."[4] This Lawrence defined as Whitfield voicing the choir on a basic triad over extended harmonies in the accompanying instrumentation. One example of this tension occurs in Whitfield's original composition "With My Whole Heart." The choir sings a root position F major triad over an extended

A7 chord (Figure 1). Whitfield found it crucial that each singer had an independent ear to hear extended chordal structures.

Another aspect of the Company's innovative sound was its extension of what Andrew Legg referred to as foundational gospel singing techniques.[5] The choir showcased an innate ability to sing highly dramatized yet equally balanced and tempered vocal "acrobatics," such as swells and slides. In an example in "With My Whole Heart," the crescendo marks represent vocal "swells," which are often denoted by a widening of the vowel along with a heightening of volume (Figure 2).

The Company also normalized and made popular the use of the vocal slide in gospel music. Lawrence notes that this was rarely, if ever, performed in gospel music before then. Such vocal techniques are more common in musical theatre performances among soloists and smaller cast ensembles. Listening to the vocal slides in "Noth-

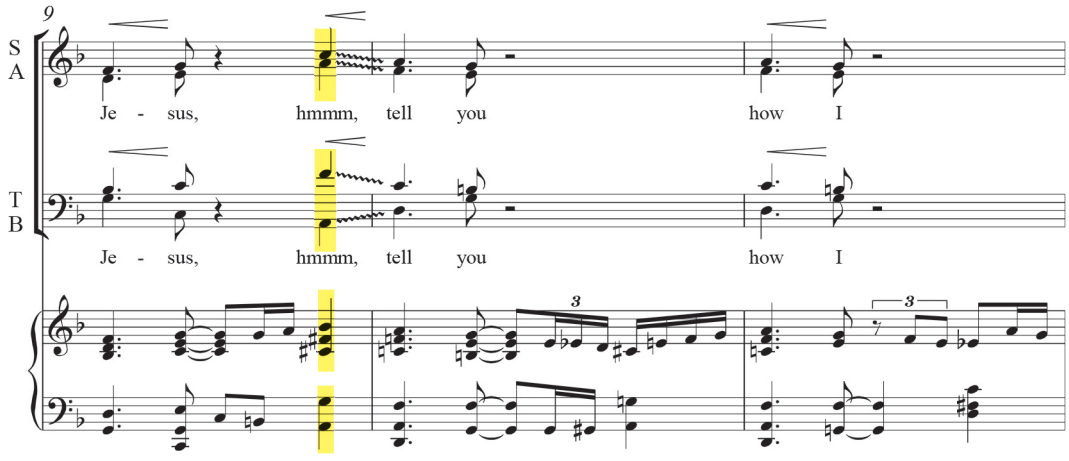

Figure 1. Thomas Whitfield, *With My Whole Heart,* mm. 9–11.
"Unavailable tension" denoted in yellow

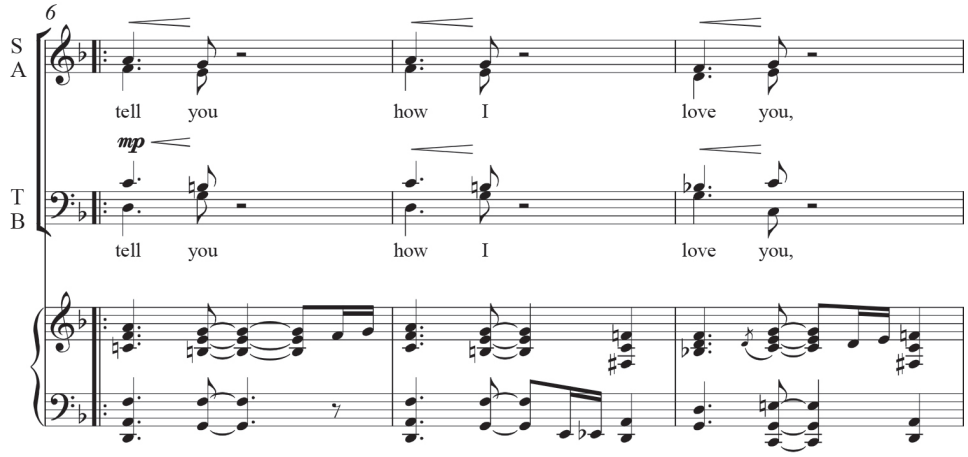

Figure 2. Thomas Whitfield, *With My Whole Heart,* mm. 6–8.
Vocal swells represented by crescendo marks

ing but the Blood" on the Alive and Satisfied project, for instance, one can hear how the Company sings them in three-part harmony with calculated precision. This level of accuracy and cohesiveness, especially for choirs of that size, established a new standard for large ensemble singing in gospel music.

The "varied and diverse gifts" of the Company were perhaps most vividly represented in its cast of soloists. Theirs are the voices that brought to life Whitfield's ardent desires for his music and ministry. Each of these singer's voices was unique. Larry Edwards's voice, for instance, almost baritonal in its warmth, was a vibrant tenor with an extensive upper range; this contrasted with the more youthful and lilting tenor timbre of Ron Kelly. For years Edwards and Kelly not only stood as the lead male vocalists of the Company but, along with other staunch tenor soloists like Michael Fletcher and Scott Bard-Mansur, embodied the heroic sound of the Company's tenor section.

Soprano soloists were just as varied in vocal timbre. Sandra Hudson's tone was as luxurious as it was soulful in her soprano register. Gwen Morton's solo work exuded the balance of Pentecostal grit with the sweeter and more controlled elements of her voice. Denise Morton brought an almost anthemic nature to her gospel style. Her high-seated soprano voice was a flexible, multi-octave display of gospel riffs and classical melismas that displayed her ability to blend the classical and gospel influences in her singing.

The alto soloists were also diverse. Wendy Davis's distinctive tone, combining her warm middle range and reedy exterior timbre, made for a powerhouse sound that exemplified the Pentecostal drive of Whitfield's shout songs. The voice of JoAnn Hill Brown was the definition of Baptist fervor. Even with the sometimes almost reckless abandon of her traditional gospel vocalism in the upper range, the smooth husk of Brown's middle and lower registers made her a perfect fit for the contemporized hymn arrangements Whitfield set with her voice in mind.

Lydia Wright's singing influenced a legion of choir soloists to follow. Wright's improvisational styling contained both a religious fire and a jazzy bounce. "I love [to hear] women that make me want to scream and snatch my wig off," said Lillian Lloyd, noted soloist with Ricky Dillard & New Generation.[6] Lydia found Whitfield's new approach to gospel music to be a perfect fit for her less-than-traditional singing style.[7] She also appreciated the creative freedom that he fostered among his soloists. "As much as we regarded him and respected the value he brought and the quality of his musicianship, he felt the same way about us."

Whitfield's penchant for blend was unwavering. While each of the soloists' voices and singing styles could not be any more different than the other, their individual voices could not be detected when singing in the Company. Many of the Company members stated he achieved this, in part, through vowel unification. Lydia Wright noted that the Company's sound was birthed out of ensuring proper enunciation of vowel sounds. "It was like a whole new alphabet that he taught us," Scott Bard-Mansur recalled.[8] As with more classically trained choral ensembles, Whitfield often had the Company warm up with various vocalises to further instill these techniques.

Lawrence, who attributed his concept of the Tri-City Singers to an urban contemporary version of the Whitfield Company, described the recipe for the sound of the choir:

> One of the recipes of Tommy's choir was a lot of altos and tenors, and a little less on soprano. But the sopranos cut through. And it gave you that weight. So if you really notice, Tri-City has heavy alto. We have more tenors than anything. We have 16 tenors, about 12 altos, and sometimes about 10 sopranos. And again, that particular recipe gave me the weight that I love at the bottom of the choir, still making sure that the sopranos cut through. I really paid attention to how [Whitfield] constructed [the Company] and that was a model for me.

Extending from their vocal technique, one of the predominant factors that set the Company apart was its ability to maintain beauty of tone in the higher tessitura. Whitfield often voiced the choral parts in ranges that were largely inaccessible to most non-professional choirs. "We as altos often sang soprano," JoAnn Hill-Brown remembered. "So where did that put sopranos? I don't know." Even so, Whitfield demanded a great deal

of technical prowess from his singers. Lawrence recalled some of the Company sopranos telling him that Whitfield admonished them that while the notes may be high, it had better not look like they were singing high.

Also among the intriguing aspects of the Whitfield Company sound was how deeply connected the singing was to Thomas's playing. Donna Harris noted that while many musical organizations utilize the choir director as the creative lead, the Whitfield Company "wasn't set up that way." She continued that because Whitfield was the creator, he used the musical instrument at which he played—most often the organ—to create "that inspiration, and later, [creative] control."

Tyrone Block, longtime director of the famed Milton Brunson's Thompson Community Singers, referred to the sound of the Whitfield Company as "timeless" and also observed, "They were doing something different."[9] The elegance of the Company's vocalism, rooted in the sophisticated style of Detroit gospel, and the expressive diversity of its singers was bolstered by Whitfield's technical determination and his contemporizing of gospel harmony. It was within the organic, collaborative context of the Whitfield Company that Thomas Whitfield redefined the choral style and sound of gospel music.

Blending Gospel, Jazz, and Classicism

As a student of famed Detroit musicians Alfred Bolden, Herbert Pickard, and Frank White, Whitfield developed a style of gospel piano and organ playing imbued with classical and jazz influences that translated into the distinctive style of the Whitfield Sound. Richard Smallwood, the formally trained pianist and composer noted for fusing classical idioms into his gospel style, stated that, first and foremost, Whitfield was "an incredible pianist. He was one of the most amazing pianists around."[10] Donald Lawrence exclaimed that when he first began studying Whitfield's music, he thought he was listening to someone play "with six or seven hands … I think that he kind of channeled Oscar Peterson at the piano."

Peterson, one of jazz music's most celebrated pianists, serves as a fitting influence on Whitfield's unparalleled use of extended harmonies in gospel music. Lawrence stated that while contemporaries like Andraé Crouch, Edwin and Walter Hawkins all benefited from jazz influences, Whitfield's stream of jazz extension in gospel was on another level. "He definitely was the forerunner for how I think most keyboard players play today," said Lawrence. "I would say ninety-five to ninety-nine percent of them."

For the sheer volume of musical innovations he brought to gospel music, Whitfield accumulated a repertory of terms accredited to him that exemplified the Whitfield Sound. Chords with major jazz extensions became known as Whitfield chords. Whitfield turns detailed certain passing chord progressions that he regularly utilized in his compositions and arrangements. Even in terms of his songwriting—particularly found in his hymn settings—Whitfield revolutionized song structure with intros, tags, and vamps that progressed storyline in his writing. In essence, the Whitfield Sound redefined how composers and instrumentalists alike approached writing and playing gospel music.

While his original compositional output is significant, Whitfield's arrangements of hymns perhaps best exemplify the totality of his creative imagination. His melodic, harmonic, and textual restructuring of these traditional hymns represent the presence of both classical and jazz influences in gospel music.

Almost all of Whitfield's hymn arrangements follow a relatively specific structure, particularly those that are solo-led. He expanded the traditional verse/chorus structure to include a stylized instrumental introit, a soloist-intoned verse, and a call-and-response-style duet between soloist and chorus, which is concluded by a quasi-improvisational vamp. "Down at the Cross," for example, is based on the Isaac Watts/Ralph Hudson hymn "Alas, and Did My Savior Bleed" (Figure 3 on page 13).

The first audible hallmark of Whitfield's hymn arrangements is the use of deliberately stylized introits. While most gospel music recordings before this time began by simply stating a later portion of the song, or even just rolling a chord, Whitfield regularly composed intros that more aptly set the framework for the piece. In his setting of "Down at the Cross" we hear the intoning of a portion of the traditional hymn melody placed over his trademark jazz extensions (Figure 4 on page 13).

The second part of the song entails the lining of the verse melody. The soloist is isolated with instrumental

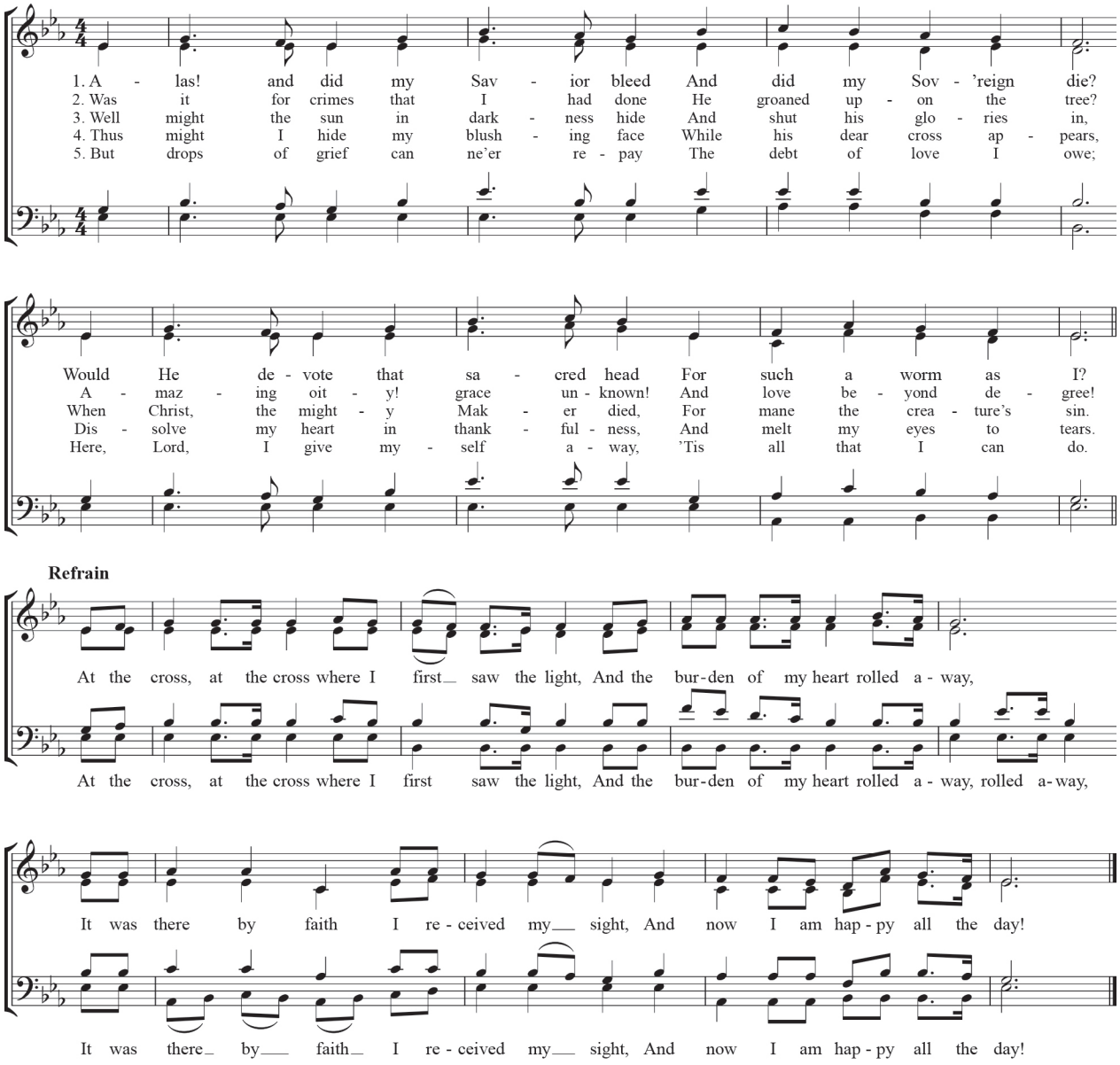

Figure 3. Traditional Hymn, *Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed.*
(commonly referred to as "At the Cross")

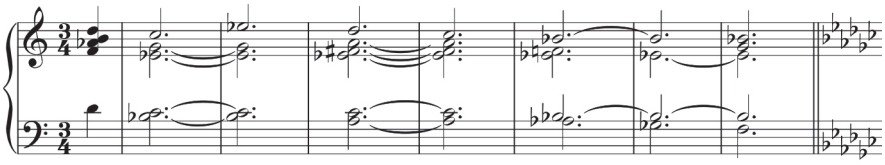

Figure 4. Thomas Whitfield, *Down at the Cross,* Introit, mm. 1–8.

accompaniment. The singer is careful to maintain the integrity of the hymn tune, albeit with slight improvisation. Whitfield reimagines the traditional chord structure, however, with a variety of extended harmonies (Figure 5).

What occurs after the lining of the verse is pivotal to the song structure, as in this moment Whitfield transitions from arranger to composer. Where the traditional hymn chorus would usually follow, the choir inhabits the role of a Shakespearean chorus of sorts, providing musical commentary to what was previously stated by the soloist. Referring back to the hymn refrain in Figure 3, it is clear that Whitfield veers away from the traditional chorus in favor of new melodic, harmonic, and textual material (Figure 6 on page 15).

The following section constitutes what is generally referred to as a Whitfield vamp. The extended ostinato form explores varied harmonic material that is characteristic of Whitfield's writing. Several telling markers include the use of non-chord tones and stacked chords (Figure 7 on page 16).

Whitfield also popularized the use of passing chord sequences in gospel music. Perhaps the most significant occasion is found in the vamp of "Only a Look." Herein he includes a brief instrumental interlude detailing a classically infused secondary-dominant passing chord sequence that descends into a repetition of the choral vamp. This sequence is often referred to as the definitive Whitfield turn (Figure 8 on page 16).

In his dissertation, Dr. Raymond Wise categorized the major periods of gospel music from 1900 to 2000. He placed Thomas Whitfield at the helm of a list of pioneering composers and artists that comprised what Wise referred to as the Word/Ministry era of the 1980s and 1990s. Wise wrote that this era included "extended dominant chords (in all chords through a progression)."[11] This progression, most often in Whitfield's case, was "used in voicing chords that travel around a circle of fourths and fifths." Whitfield frequently used circular progressions in his writing. One prominent example is found in the refrain of another of his hymn arrangements, "Oh, How I Love Jesus" (Figure 9 on page 17).

Another trademark of Whitfield's writing is found in the ending of "Down at the Cross" (Figure 10 on page 17).

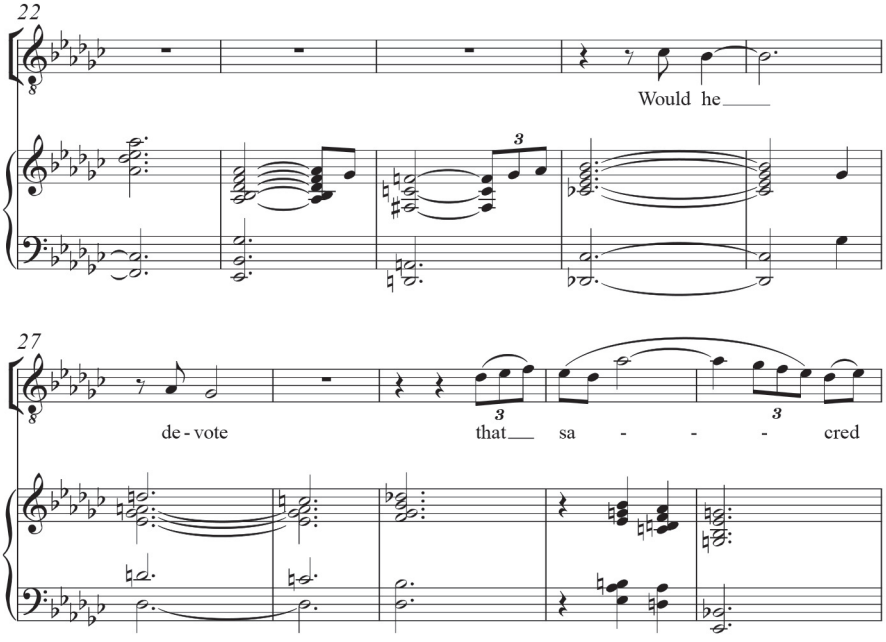

Figure 5. Thomas Whitfield, *Down at the Cross,* mm. 22–31.

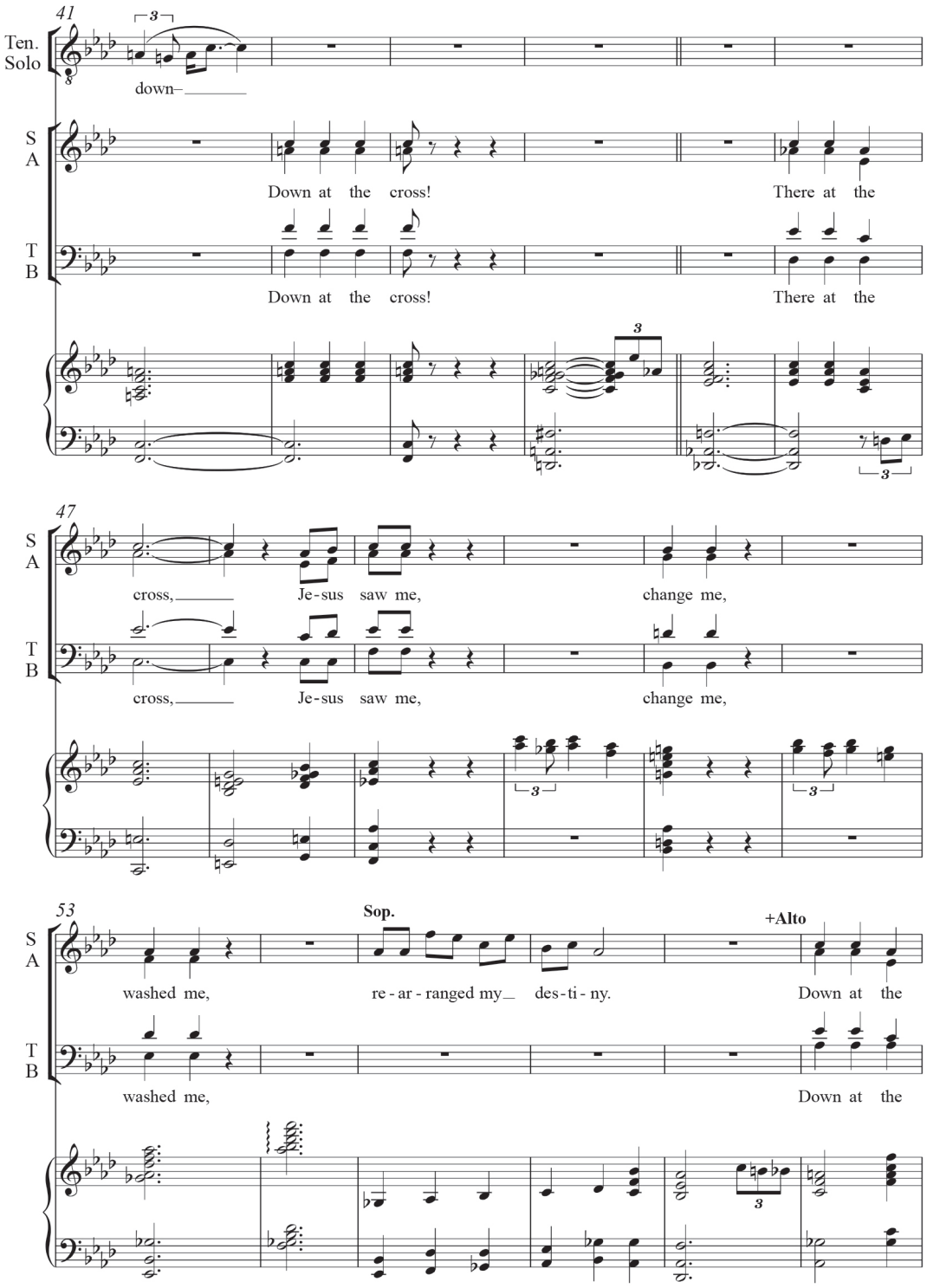

Figure 6. Thomas Whitfield, *Down at the Cross,* mm. 41–58. Chorus excerpt

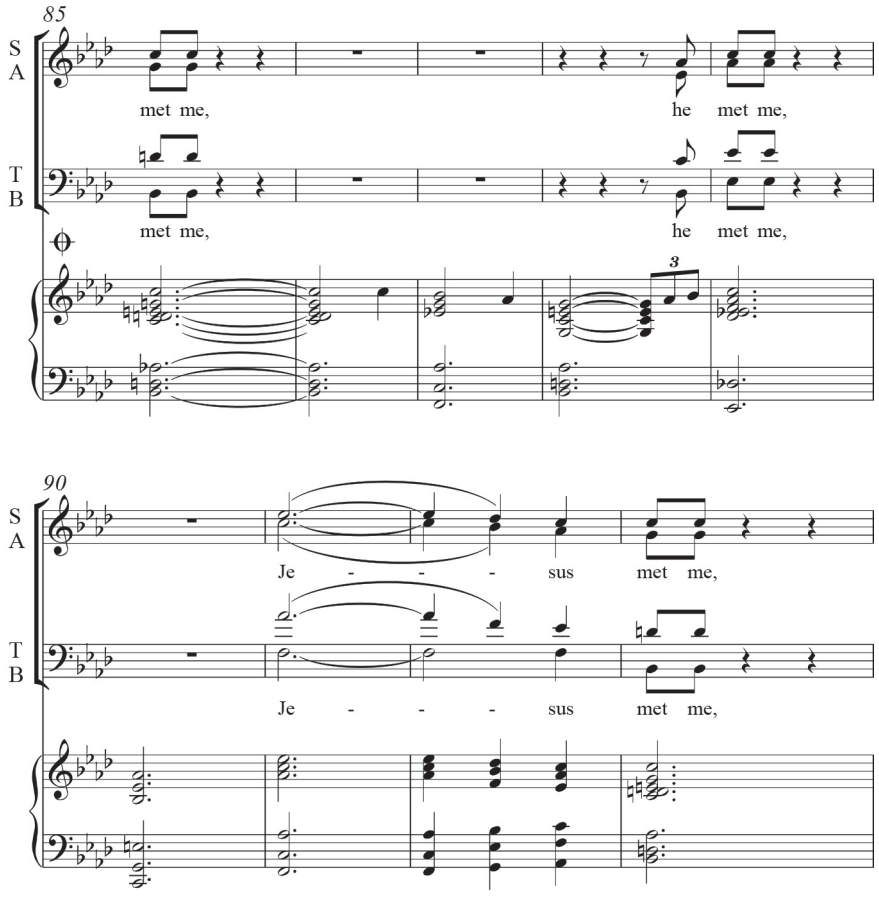

Figure 7. Thomas Whitfield, *Down at the Cross,* mm. 85–93.
Vamp excerpt

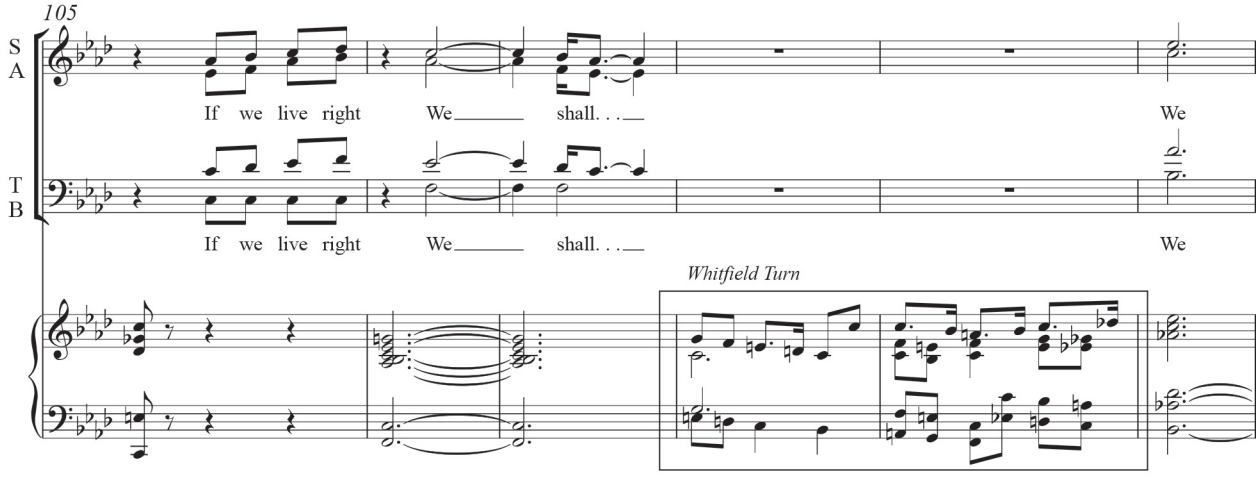

Figure 8. Thomas Whitfield, *Only a Look,* mm. 105–110.
Vamp excerpt
Transcribed from recording

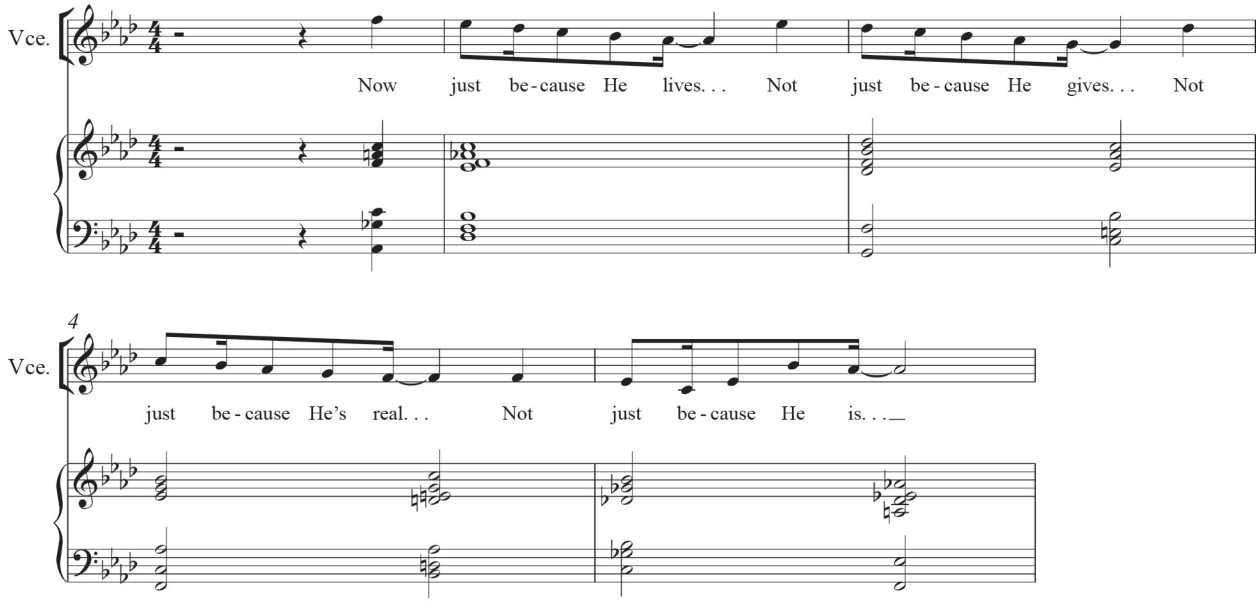

Figure 9. Thomas Whitfield, *Oh, How I Love Jesus,* mm. 1–5.
Refrain
Transcribed from recording

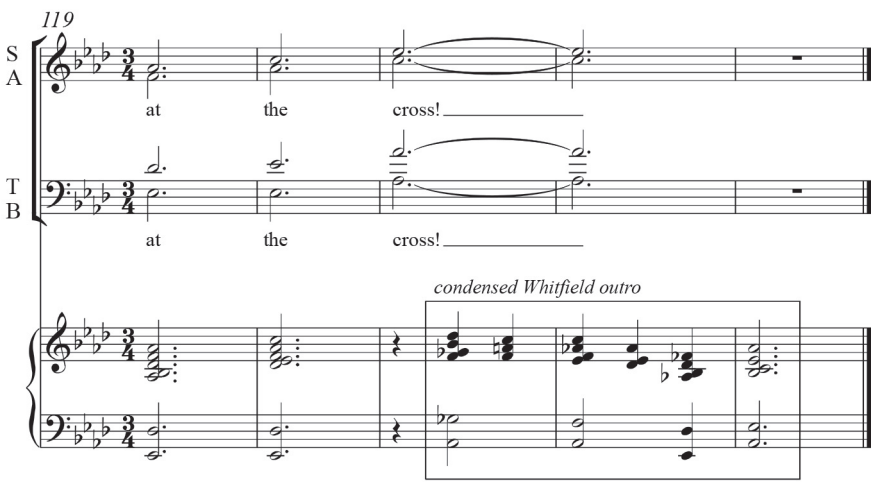

Figure 10. Thomas Whitfield, *Down at the Cross,* mm. 119–123.
Ending

This definitive Whitfield outro places a through-composed melody over a pedal-tone progression utilizing suspended and diminished chords, as well as an augmented non-chord tone that is prevalent in his writing. The outro is heard in its clearest form at the end of "We Need a Word from the Lord" from his *My Faith* album.

Whitfield even redefined the harmonic approach to the more up-tempo Pentecostal shout songs, fusing extended harmonies into the traditional gospel-blues form. His introit to "Praise His Name" begins with an almost jarring series of stacked and suspended chords before transitioning with a traditional gospel ascending progression to tonic as the choir enters (Figure 11).

For extra measure, Whitfield created an instrumental shout progression of his own, clearly an homage to his mentor Alfred Bolden's famed "Jesus" shout progression. The Whitfield shout is first heard via recording on "Let Everything Praise Him" from *Alive and Satisfied* (Figure 12).

The aural impact of Whitfield's revelatory blending of gospel, jazz, and classicism in his writing has dominated the sound of gospel music for the past several decades. Inventive hymn arrangements such as Kurt Carr's "Holy, Holy, Holy," James Hall's "The Blood," and Donald Lawrence's "Sweet Little Jesus Boy," are clear descendants of the songwriting form Whitfield established in his hymn settings. Gospel instrumentalists

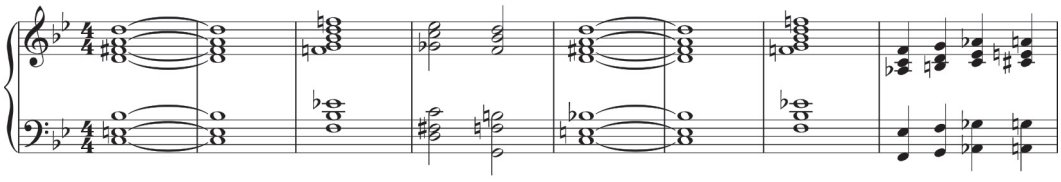

Figure 11. Thomas Whitfield, *Praise His Name,* mm. 1–8.
Introduction
Transcribed from recording

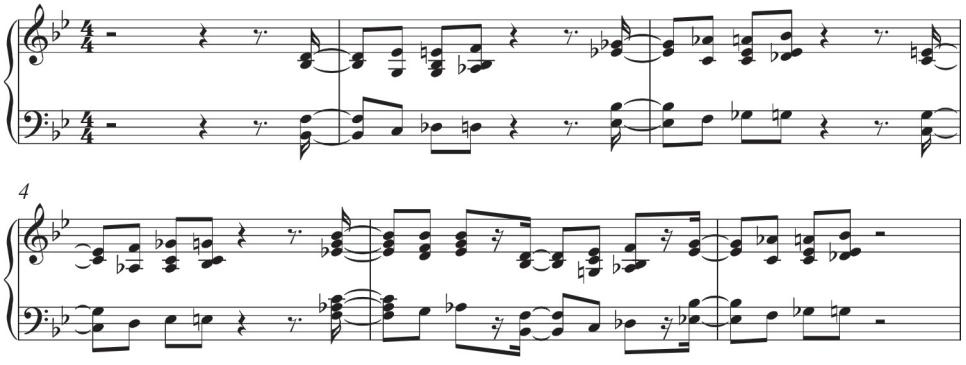

Figure 12. Thomas Whitfield, *Let Everything Praise Him,* mm. 1–6.
"Whitfield Shout"
Transcribed from recording

have utilized many of his trademark creations, such as the Whitfield shout (Rudolph Stanfield's "Hold On"), the Whitfield turn (Michael Fletcher's "Everything I Need I Found in God"), and the Whitfield outro (Rodnie Bryant's "We Offer Praise"). Kurt Carr even used the theme of a famous Whitfield vamp, from "Peace Be Still," in his "Peace In the Midst of Your Storm."

Gospel historian and critic Charles Clency wrote of Whitfield's music as "a unique blend of lyricism, classicism, diatonicism, chromaticism, Pentecostal rhythmic fervor, and unusual harmonic stacking."[12] While what Whitfield introduced to gospel music was harmonically "unusual" in the late '70s and early '80s, it has become today's norm. The Whitfield Sound is the harmonic vocabulary of contemporary gospel music.

Creating Orchestral Textures

Thomas Whitfield was an avid moviegoer. Such leisure served as his primary means of respite outside of a steadily busying music career. Whitfield, however, did not attend these movies simply for entertainment value:

> I sit there and watch the screen and block out all the background music. Then I score it in my head. I'd love to do a movie score. To just sit down and watch a theme, then make the music to fit every mood and feeling, that would be a great challenge to me. I think that would be fantastic.[13]

Whitfield's penchant for movie orchestration brought cinematic scope to gospel music. As Master Producer of the 1980s, his exhaustive volume of work during the decade led a revolution in innovative production techniques in gospel music recording as well as created new and inventive avenues for producers and instrumentalists alike.

When Whitfield began recording with the Company in the late '70s, Black gospel music had only recently begun to widen its purview to the use of instruments other than the piano, organ, and occasional drum set. Seemingly secular instruments such as electric bass and guitar had long been a source of controversy in the gospel music genre and were just as of the past decade showing more of a presence in gospel music recordings. Whitfield sought to further push the envelope.

The first volume of the *Things That We Believe* project demonstrates Whitfield's inventive orchestration. In the album notes Whitfield is credited as conductor, orchestrator, and arranger, as well as acoustic and electric keyboardist. The instrumental lineup is expansive, with timpani, drums, rhythm and lead guitar, trumpet, trombone, congas, and harp. Added to these is the use of "Special Moog Effects."[14]

From the opening of the album, Whitfield creates a scene reminiscent of a cinematic prelude. "Dawn of Hope" begins with a lone note intoned by a string patch on the synthesizer before being joined by wind sound effects. Soon after, the trumpeter enters along with the bass, presenting a semi-ostinato foundation as the other instruments enter to build momentum. The choir comes in at the peak of the piece, vocalizing an anthemic melody on a classically rounded "ah" as the synthesized symphonic texture surrounds them. As the prelude dies down, the wind sound effects resume, seamlessly transitioning into the first formal song of the album, "This is My Prayer."

"Dawn of Hope" represents a move in a new direction in terms of a gospel music production. While the use of synthesizers was not entirely unprecedented, Whitfield broadened the concept to encompass more orchestral textures in his writing.[15] As Crouch's music took a turn toward the Contemporary Christian side with more funk and soul infused sources, Whitfield created an aural world imbued with classicized and jazz-tinged influences that were still firmly rooted in gospel music.

Things That We Believe, Vols. 1 & 2 represents a balancing of the performative and creative partnership of voice and instrument in gospel music. Whitfield places brief instrumental interludes ("Reflect") in both volumes. These interludes constitute another hallmark of the Whitfield Sound, granting more improvisatory license to the band. "Saints in Flight" from the *My Faith* album is a three-and-a-half-minute straight-ahead jazz piece solely featuring the band. "Oft Times and Wonders" from *Alive and Satisfied* is also purely instrumental, albeit more of a thematic reprise of the vamp from an earlier track, "Oh, Hallelujah."

During the 1980s, Whitfield reached a zenith of exploratory genius in terms of production quality. Dr. Birgitta Johnson wrote:

> By the mid-eighties Whitfield was fully utilizing MIDI sequencers, the most significant development in synthesizer technology at that time. His pioneering use of MIDI synthesizers in gospel also helped to define the Whitfield Sound. With MIDI synthesizers, Whitfield could incorporate string sound presets and the variety of electric keyboard sounds already popular in secular music (e.g., the clavinet, Moog, strings, horns, percussion, and sound effects).[16]

Projects such as *Hold Me,* Armstrong's *Peace Be Still,* Adams's *Just As I Am,* and Pringle's *Perfect Peace* cemented Whitfield's status as a sought-after producer whose exploration of sound influenced gospel music production standards for years to come. Whether it be the lush string and E.P. underlay in *Hold Me's* "Psalms," the stormy and rushing wind effect that prefaces "Peace Be Still," the jazz-infused sax and bell melody that begins *Just As I Am's* "I Am," or the haunting horn entrance of "Perfect Peace," the Whitfield Sound developed into an unmistakable aural sensation, further defining his musical presence.

As distinctive as the Whitfield Sound is, it never overtook the unique sound of each artist with whom he worked. "He got into the heart of the artist," said Donald Lawrence. "He knew how to find it, and he even matched them with the right song. Once he found the right song, he put his arrangement to it, and gave them the space to sing. There was just nothing like it. With the background vocals, the arrangements, the approach to chords and progressions," Lawrence said, "you knew that it was Whitfield."

Steven Ford likened Whitfield's gift as a consummate producer to the relationship between language and dialect. For all of the varied artists with whom he worked, Ford stated that "Thomas was able to change dialect, although we understood it was his language."[17] As the Master Producer, Whitfield influenced not only the way gospel music producers approach the inclusion of sound but also the placement of it. He is the Father of Modern Gospel Music Production.

Deepening of Intimacy in Gospel Song Lyrics

Oh, my saints you forget how to call me by name…

When you sing or you preach of the one who is real…

Is it shame or for fame that you push me away…

Can you know how I feel that I died so you might live today…

Just in case you've forgotten my name…

It's Jesus…

I'm Jesus Christ.

Whitfield penned these lyrics to the song "Just In Case You've Forgotten" in response to a heartfelt conversation with Gwen Morton about his place in gospel music ministry. Kirk Franklin stated that the lyrics felt "very romantic, like God was a person that was affected by our rejection."[18] He said, "When I'm getting ready to go onstage or to undertake a life-changing event, I'll listen to it in my headphones because it helps me focus, and reminds me of what it is I do and why I do it."[19]

The personification and romanticism of Jesus Christ in gospel song lyrics was revelatory even in 1991, when the song was released at the end of Whitfield's *My Faith* album.[20] Whitfield, nearing the end of his life, experienced a career-long transformation not only in his music but in his lyricism. The texts he penned became as elevated as the harmonies he wrote. This departure from traditional Black church rhetoric affirmed Whitfield's position as forerunner in Black praise and worship music.

Precious Jesus, now I love you…

How I lift high my voice with your praise…

Holy Spirit, I implore thee…

Drench my heart as my lips hark your praise…

I am persuaded, Lord to love you…

I have been changed to bless your name…
I am constrained by this great gospel…
Forever to worship thee.

Dr. Deborah Smith Pollard said that Whitfield grabbed her attention when he began to use words such as "extol" and "constrained" in his lyrics. She had not previously heard such words used in gospel music. "Precious Jesus," from the *Alive and Satisfied* album, has become one of the genre's defining praise and worship anthems. The text, however, is more than a simple declaration. Lyrics like "*now I love you*" and "*I have been changed*" illustrate a journey to relationship with Christ.

Donald Lawrence noted that the way Whitfield set lyrics was often "visual, and very storytelling." Lawrence, who is also appreciated for the deep sensitivity of his lyrics, called Whitfield a "great picture painter with his lyrics." He related the text of "Hold Me" to that of a theatrical monologue.

Hold me, when I feel my every foe…
Hold me, when my heart is getting cold…
Hold me, when I just don't understand…
Hold me, and I won't let go Your hand…
I want to rest in You.

Even though the actor is alone on the stage, it is generally clear to whom he or she is speaking. Lawrence defined praise and worship as "singing to God and telling Him how you feel about Him…that conversation between the two of you." What he appreciated about Whitfield's approach is that "he did it based on his heart." The intimacy of his lyricism was such that he invited the listener into his communication with God.

Bishop Yvette Flunder, a founding voice in the development of contemporary gospel music, said she loved the way Whitfield "sang passionately about his love for Jesus. It wasn't religious. It was a personal relationship."[21] Whitfield wrote songs that "talked to God, and talked about intimacy." Flunder referred to his songs as "prayer with wings."

Hallelujah, Anyhow…
Hallelujah, Anyhow.
Just keep on praising Him…
Hallelujah, Anyhow.

Here Whitfield's lyricism explores the depth of simplicity. Dr. Birgitta Johnson wrote that his "praise and worship music includes the congregational singing which calls for more unison parts and simple melodies that encourage communal participation."[22] Whitfield's narrative efforts encouraged the vertically motivated worship associated with the developing form at that time. Company songs like "Hallelujah, Anyhow" and "Dear Jesus," for example, introduced praise and worship to the Black church community.

Lillian Lloyd stated that Whitfield "made us become lovers of God even the more just on his testimony." Extending from the narrative gifts of his mentor Rev. James Cleveland, Whitfield often introduced an aura of worship in his narrations, exhorting the audience in a participatory communion. Lloyd recounted Whitfield's prefacing narration to "Hallelujah, Anyhow":

> After I kept walking with the Lord and walking with Him and walking with Him…I learned that a few trials would come. A few things would try to take me off course. But there was one word that he put deep in my 'members. He put the word 'Hallelujah.'

JoAnn Hill Brown said that she once believed that all lyrical content in music had to rhyme until Whitfield penned "Dear Jesus." When this statement was presented to Ford, he likened Whitfield's writing to that of German Lieder. In Lieder, Ford maintained that the lyrical content is "foremost." It is "poetry without rhyme."

Dear Jesus, Son of the Living God…
We extol You, and adore You…
Dear Jesus…
Oh, Jesus…
You have my praise.

"Dear Jesus" is intriguing not only because of the choice of text but also because of the rhythmic underlay of the lyrics. Whitfield presents the text in a classicized recitative form, and the choir follows suit. The speech-like nature of recitative further enhances the concept of the conversational nature of Whitfield's lyricism.

Whitfield often transitioned from the conversational nature of his music to promoting spoken communication with God during concerts and recordings. He encouraged the enhancement of personal intimacy in worship throughout the song and afterwards. Johnson wrote that Whitfield included worship interludes on several of his albums, including "Sacrifices of Praise" from *Hallelujah Anyhow.* Johnson also noted that the track "consists of the audience and choir engaged in collective improvisation and musical praise over a pedal point in D-flat major held by the band."[23] With the live studio concept that Whitfield introduced to gospel music, he was able to recreate the worship aesthetic at the end of songs such as "Precious Jesus/Worship Overture" and "His Eye Is On The Sparrow."

> *We don't need another political uprising…*
>
> *We don't need another conqueror on the scene…*
>
> *What we need is a special word that will burn within our hearts…*
>
> *And give us direction from above…*
>
> *We need a word from the Lord.*

In an attempt to make gospel music more palatable to nontraditional churchgoers, composers began to utilize more indefinite pronouns in their writing, such as he, you, and it. It was certainly not uncommon for one to listen to the radio during the '80s and '90s and to become completely enraptured by a song without any knowledge of the piece's undergirding lyrical intent. Many of contemporary gospel's most famous artists often found their music played in clubs and other more secularly themed venues.

Whitfield, whose lyrical content never wavered in its staunch presentation, responded to the artistic conundrum:

> Gospel songs say things that people who have problems can take home with them. People who feel as if their lives have no purpose used to be able to hold on to a gospel song. It was something that gave you hope until your prayers were answered. If gospel lyrics and songs do not relay that same sense of hope and peace, then we are failing. If we lose the hope, then we've lost the purity of gospel music.[24]

Songs such as "We Need a Word from the Lord," "With My Whole Heart," and "Lift Those Hands and Bless Him" may have certainly blurred the already amorphous line between gospel and Black praise and worship music, especially during a time when the term "praise and worship" was not fully realized in the Black church. Regardless of category, however, Whitfield's lyrics remained pure whether they were "mountain high" or "valley low" in concept. Lyricism as it relates to textual considerations is just as much a part of the music-making process as is singing and playing. The Whitfield Sound is audible proof of such.

Conclusions

For all of the genre defining work of his contemporaries, such as Andraé Crouch, Walter and Edwin Hawkins, only Thomas Whitfield's name invokes an aural vocabulary that distinctly details his sound. The Whitfield Company helped to define the sound with an unprecedented level of technique, detail and precision in gospel music choirs. Whitfield further developed the sound with his inventive blending of gospel, jazz, and classical harmonies, progressions, and forms. As the Master Producer, Whitfield created orchestral textures in gospel music that developed not only his own distinctive sound, but also that of artists such as Vanessa Bell Armstrong and Yolanda Adams. Finally, Whitfield's art-song-like interpretation of lyricism unveiled the intimacy of gospel music, setting the stage for Black praise and worship. Earl Wright, Jr., Whitfield's longtime musical collaborator, wrote this of the Whitfield Sound:

In its completed form, it became a prophetically timeless spiritual music and choral worship expression that went straight to the heart, bypassing words, arrangements and notes! It's not what we hear, it's what we feel! The Whitfield Sound became the outward worship expression of the gift that God planted deep, deep down in the soul of my friend and bro, Min. Thomas A. Whitfield. Gone but not forgotten![25] CJ

NOTES

[1] Donald Lawrence, in discussion with the author, March 2019.

[2] Dr. Tony McNeill, in discussion with the author, March 2019.

[3] Donna Harris, in discussion with the author, September 2018. All subsequent statements by Harris are from this conversation. Harris is a former president of the Whitfield Company.

[4] Donald Lawrence, in discussion with the author, July 2018. All subsequent statements by Lawrence are from this conversation.

[5] Refer to Legg's article "A Taxonomy of Musical Gesture in African American Gospel Music" for a more in-depth description of these techniques. Andrew Legg, "A Taxonomy of Musical Gesture in African American Gospel Music," *Popular Music* 29, no. 1. (2010): 103-129.

[6] Lillian Lloyd, in conversation with the author, January 2018.

[7] Lydia Wright, in conversation with the author, March 2019.

[8] Scott Bard-Mansur, in conversation with the author, December 2017.

[9] Tyrone Block, in conversation with the author, January 2018.

[10] Richard Smallwood, in conversation with the author, February 2018.

[11] Raymond Wise, "On Teaching Students to Compose in the Gospel Genre: The Work of Raymond Wise," in *Musicianship: Composing in Choir,* ed. Jody L. Kerchner and Katherine Strand (Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 2016), 210.

[12] Charles Clency, in conversation with the author, March 2019.

[13] Joyce Walker-Tyson, "The Whitfield sound is soaring high in heavenly music," *Detroit Free Press,* September 14, 1981, 8F.

[14] Moog, another American manufacturer of electronic musical instruments, developed the Minimoog in 1970. It became one of the most impactful instruments in the field.

[15] Crouch, Cleveland, and the Hawkinses had previously utilized synthesizers in their respective projects.

[16] Birgitta Johnson, "Oh, For A Thousand Tongues to Sing: Music and Worship in African American Megachurches of Los Angeles, California" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2008), 295.

[17] Steven Ford, in discussion with the author, February 2018. All subsequent statements by Ford are from this discussion.

[18] Adelle Platon, "Kirk Franklin on Gospel Music's Past, Present & Future," *Tidal* online, February 12, 2018, http://read.tidal.com/article/black-history-month-2018-kirk-franklin-past-present-future.

[19] Roy Trakin, "Kirk Franklin: The Message of "Why," Lyrics & Stevie Wonder," Recording Academy Grammy Awards online, September 5, 2017, https://www.grammy.com/grammys/news/kirk-franklin-message-why-lyrics-stevie-wonder.

[20] Whitfield recorded the song again as the penultimate track on *Alive and Satisfied.* This time he performed it as a vocal solo.

[21] Bishop Yvette Flunder, in discussion with the author, August 2018. All subsequent statements by Flunder are from this discussion.

[22] Johnson, 293.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Christian, "Gospel moves."

[25] Earl Wright, Jr., in conversation with the author, March 2019.

R. Nathaniel Dett's *The Chariot Jubilee* An Instrument for Fostering Racial Harmony

JASON MAX FERDINAND

The progress of people of African heritage in classical music offers an intricate portrait that has not always been clearly visible. However, their contribution can be readily seen in Negro spirituals, jazz, gospel, and other American popular styles. Jazz rhythms and blues intervals infuse concert music of Ives, Gershwin, and Copland in America; Ravel, Milhaud, and Dvořák abroad; and many more recent composers from both sides of the Atlantic. Yet, many music history books offer an inadequate account of the many significant contributions to classical music composition from persons of African descent such as Robert Nathaniel Dett. Over the last century and a half, however, it has been demonstrated that both classical music and Black music have become diverse and nuanced. This article seeks to position Robert Nathaniel Dett's *The Chariot Jubilee* for SATB, solo, orchestra, and organ as an instrument for fostering racial harmony during a time in American history in which it is much needed.

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Biography

Robert Nathaniel Dett (1882-1943) was a composer, choral director, pianist, and music educator of the twentieth century. As with any musician, he is best understood when he is seen against his ancestral backdrop. Dett arose in the American musical scene when the Negro people of the United States experienced financial despair, thwarted desires, educational adversity, and physical brutality. The idioms of nineteenth-century Romanticism dominated his musical outpourings. Dett, like Dvořák, did not start a new school by using Negro tunes in his larger forms. Nevertheless, he did make dramatic and effective use of Negro spirituals and clothed them in classical garb.

He became, by the historical milieu of his time, an attentive social thinker, and his concerns and attitudes reverberate in his musical outpourings. Instead of conforming to more recognized musical forms, Dett chose to walk the path of preserving and further developing his unique Afro-American musical heritage. The Negro spiritual served as the toolbox from whence Dett expanded the simple tunes of the cotton fields into more extensive art forms.

Robert Nathaniel Dett was born in Drummondville, Ontario, Canada on October 11, 1882. Both of his parents were musical. Dett's first music lessons were with an English lady. At age eleven, an Austrian served as Nathaniel's music teacher. By this time, his aptitude to improvise and his natural musicality blossomed. When he was fourteen years old, he worked as a bell-boy at the Cataract Hotel in Niagara Falls where he was allowed to play the grand piano during his free time. His playing attracted the admiring attention of guests of the hotel, and he made many friends.

The singing of Negro spirituals was not foreign to Dett, but for him, they had no particular meaning. In fact, Dett himself later shared that the discussion of Negro spirituals or other Negro folk music was embarrassing to Black people, as the general public attitude toward such music was unappreciative or even mildly contemptuous. Dett spoke of this feeling in an interview published by *Musical America* in 1918.

> The Negro people as a whole cannot be looked to as a very great aid in the work of conserving their folk music. At the present time, they are inclined to regard it as a vestige of the slavery they are trying to put behind them and to be ashamed of it.[1]

In 1903, Dett enrolled in a five-year course of study at Oberlin College in Ohio, one of the finest conservatories of music. In a bid to foster diversity, Oberlin reached out to Black students encouraging them to enroll. Dett had a very charismatic personality and quickly became well loved by both faculty and students. Warner Concert Hall was always crowded when Dett gave recitals.[2] This trait of being able to bring people of different races together for a central purpose would be seen time and time again in the life and career of Dett.

Dett accomplished an admirable academic record: he gained entry into Phi Beta Kappa, was the first Negro to complete the Bachelor of Music degree, and graduated with first-class honors. Dett's studies at Oberlin included four years of composition. The most considerable influence on Dett was the instruction in composition that he received from G. W. Andrews. It was also during his time at Oberlin that the Kneisel Quartet appeared in recital. When Dett heard the slow movement from Dvořák's Quartet in F, which was based on traditional airs, the idea was born of using Negro folk melodies in art music. His knowledge of counterpoint and harmony coupled with a spark of the Negro tradition and the zest of being a recent graduate launched Dett in what was to become a career in serious music.

Subsequently, he acquired a succession of teaching positions:

- Lane College, Jackson, Tennessee (1908-1911)
- Lincoln University, Jefferson City, Missouri (1911-1913)
- Hampton Institute (later University), Hampton, Virginia (1913-1931)
- Bennett College, Greensboro, North Carolina (1937-1942)

His teaching career was punctuated by further peri-

ods of study:

- Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts (1920)
- Fountainebleau School of Music, Paris, France (1929)
- Eastman School of Music, Rochester, New York (1931-1932)

Additionally, he had two doctoral degrees conferred on him from Harvard and Oberlin. Dett joined the United Service Organization (USO) as musical director in February of 1943. In July of that year, he went on tour to Battle Creek, Michigan, to direct the musical arm of the USO club. On October 2, 1943, Dett died in Battle Creek from a heart attack.

The Chariot Jubilee

Like Dvořák, Coleridge-Taylor, and Harry T. Burleigh, among others, Dett truly was sold on the idea that the Negro folk songs were significant enough to merit the construction of larger forms around them. Armed with his distinguished training, he proved to be a champion for that cause. Though he distinguished himself as a concert pianist and teacher, he is best known as a composer and has 100 published works, principally piano, vocal, and choral. Among them was *The Chariot Jubilee,* birthed in 1919. Despite the success and glowing praise for the initial performance, interest in the work seemed to have come to a virtual halt. There were no documented performances for another seventy-seven years. In the year leading up to the seventieth birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, interest in performing works based on Negro spirituals became increasingly popular. *The Chariot Jubilee* was often considered, but the orchestra parts could not be found. Hale Smith, a noted African American composer, recreated an orchestration that a number of performing organizations utilized.

A revised and more accessible orchestration of the piece is used as we examine the work's musical fabric. In it, we will discover seamless voice leading, an intricate weave of slow and fast-moving vocal parts, and a bevy of rhythmic variations. There is even an evocation of trains, which spirituals often compared to heavenly chariots. As the analysis of this work will show *The Chariot Jubillee* is disciplined, yet decorously expressive.

Text

The text, based on both Scripture and folklore, serves as a source of inspiration for composers of many genres. Moreover, African American spirituals are revered as heartfelt expressions of faith. The two sources of Dett's inspiration—Scripture and folklore—are so cleverly combined that it is sometimes difficult to differentiate them.

The form of the text is very free and embraces a number of styles. Blank verse is often used in tandem with rhymed sections. Dett does not seem to draw his lyrical content from a single passage, but rather a collection of stories, passages, and biblical events. Table 1 on page 28 includes a hypothesized summary of those correlations that are most recognizable and indicated.

Score and Musical Analysis

Frederick Martens presented a critical description of the oratorio in 1921:

> It is only a short score of some thirty-one pages, yet may claim to be a masterpiece of its kind. It has that inner cohesion, that unity of inspiration, of progressive culminating movement, the free yet musically logical simultaneous development which harmonizes rich detail with breadth of outline, all of which are so much more important than any mere outward and uninspired formal development. It is built—a whole throbbing, pulsing movement, whose fermatas are less interruptions of the mounting tide of choral motion than points of emphasis and departure for a more sustained and colorful working up—on a few themes. These the composer has handled with a master's control of his material. The richest variety of dynamic and interpretative effect, sole passages with cantellations that stand forth gloriously, a splendidly contrasted handling of inner and outer voices in a counterpoint which is never arid: an ever-increasing fervor of expression, a

Table 1. The Chariot Jubilee Text and Hypothesized References

The Chariot Jubilee Text – R. Nathaniel Dett	Hypothesized References
Down from the heavens, a golden chariot swinging, Comes God's promise of salvation. (Amen, Amen!) Hallelujah, hallelujah!	**Golden Chariot**: may refer to 2 Kings 2:11 where Elijah is taken up in a flaming chariot. **Swinging**: probably appropriated from the Negro spiritual, Swing Low Sweet Chariot. **God's promise of salvation**: in Scripture and in the slave-spiritual tradition, salvation (healing, freedom) was thought to come from above (John 3:31, 36) **Amen! Hallelujah!**: As one would imagine, these words are found throughout the Bible. However, Revelation 19 is a freedom context, so this may apply.
Swing low, sweet chariot, Coming for to carry me home, Swing low, sweet chariot, Coming for to carry me home!	See "**Golden Chariot**" and "**Swinging**"above.
God made a covenant, For the glory of His grace Through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. His gospel, full and free, Like a chariot swung from heav'n, Shall bear the true believer home, Safely home.	**God made a covenant**: This is an interesting line. Dett might be alluding to God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15: 18-21). The covenant motif runs throughout Scripture, starting in the old testament and making its way to the new testament. The basic summary is what we find in Dett's text "God made a covenant. . . through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." This is the centerpiece of the covenant motif (Jeremiah. 31:33, 34; Hebrews 8:6). Covenant = promise of salvation = salvation = safely home **For the glory of His grace**: Ephesians 1:6, 7 (read vv. 3-6, 7-14 for context). The covenant is essentially about God giving grace in and through Jesus. **His gospel, full and free, like a chariot swung from heaven**: Here, he connects gospel with promise of salvation, both of which come/swing down from heaven. . . full and free=grace. **True believer**: John 3:16, 18, 36.
Salvation, sweet cov'nant of the Lord, I shall ride up in that chariot in that morning. (Tell it, tell it.)	See "**Salvation**", "Cov'nant" and "**Golden Chariot**" above.
He who doth in Christ believe, Though he were dead, Yet shall he live. King Jesus triumphed o'er the grave! His grace alone Can sinners save.	**He who doth in Christ believe**: John 3:16, 18, 36. **Though he were dead, yet shall he live**: John 11:25, 26. **King Jesus triumphed o'er the grave**: 1 Corinthians 15:55; Acts 2:24. **His grace alone can sinners save**: Ephesians 2:8, 9.
O Hallelujah!	See "**Amen! Hallelujah!**" above.

stretto of movement, sonorous body of choral sound, and passionate intensity culminate in the magnificent allegro finale, rightly marked con abandon. The low basses at times have the ritual quality of the Greek Catholic male-choir voices. If R. Nathaniel Dett had written no other work, *The Chariot Jubilee* would suffice to make his name. It has potentialities of effect present in very few, if any, choral works of its length.[3]

Dett used the spiritual, *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot,* or fragments, for motivic, harmonic, and contrapuntal development. The harmony employed in the piece includes nineteenth and twentieth-century idioms. Several scales are used, including major, minor, chromatic, pentatonic, and modal. Contrast is achieved through new themes, varying rhythms, textural changes, and accompaniment treatment. A reduced instrumental accompaniment including flute, oboe, bassoon, french horn, piano, organ, and a string quartet, affords access

to choirs of many levels the opportunity to delve into this luminous work. This is the edition introduced and referenced in this article.

The oratorio's opening chords are a reflection of the homesickness, turmoil, and loneliness that an individual slave may have felt while working in the cotton field (Figure 1). The anguish of the opening B minor chord, followed by an E minor^{7}, followed by a more hopeful E^{4}_{2} chord, the increasing of the dynamic leading to a D^{9} chord and then finally the pleading sentiment of the negro spiritual is outlined in the bassoon and organ in what will be the home key of G major. A similar chord sequence starts at measure 11. However, the Negro spiritual theme is stated in Bb major, a minor third up

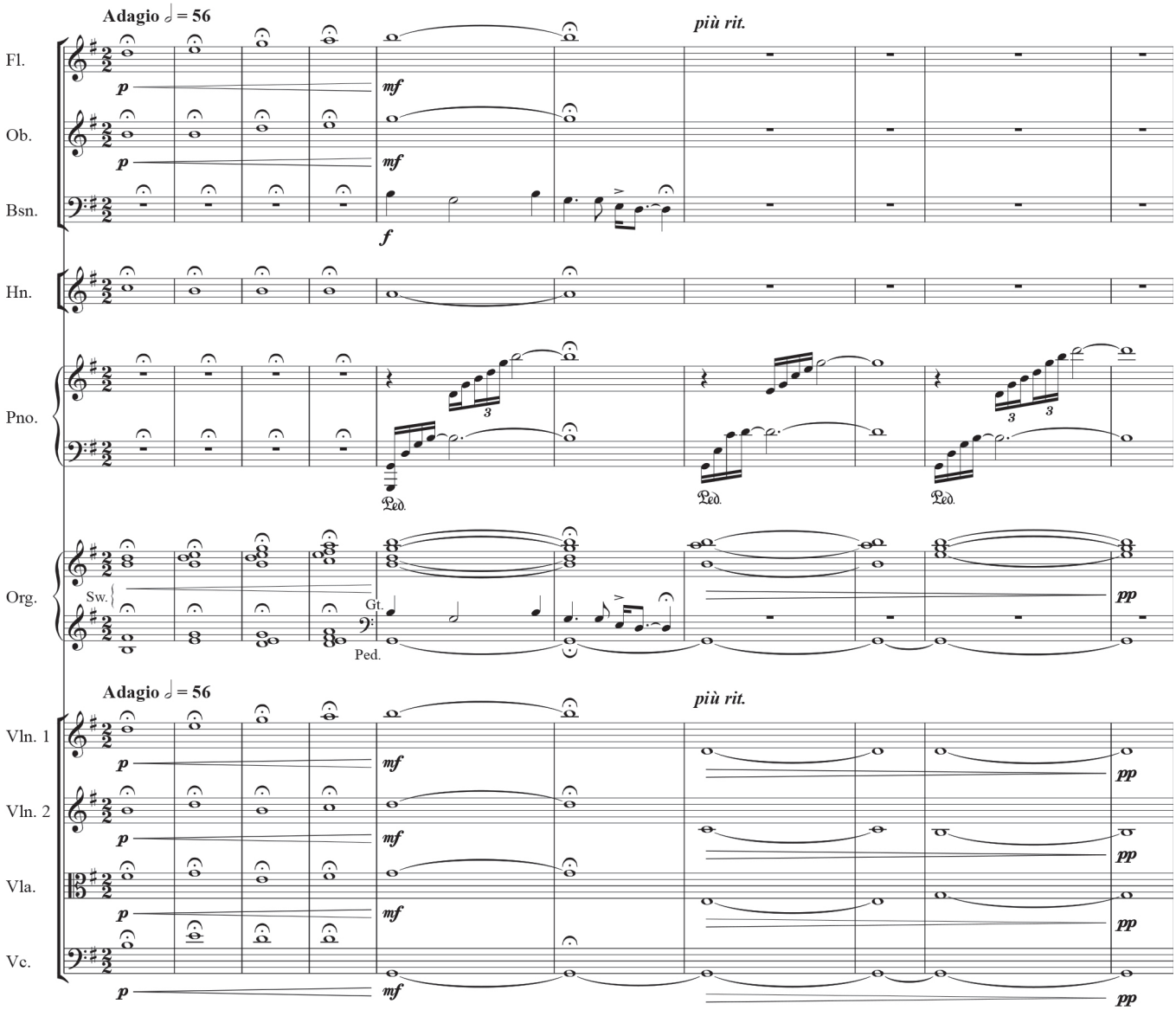

Figure 1. R. Nathaniel Dett, *The Chariot Jubilee,* mm. 1–10.
Edited by Jason Max Ferdinand.

from the first statement. This introductory statement pays tribute to Largo of Dvořák's *New World Symphony.*

At measure 21, Dett constructs a clarion call out of the despair portrayed in the piece's opening moments. At measure 27, we see the Negro spiritual theme in the organ and French horn. This time the Negro spiritual melody is repeated over four measures, thereby adding to the gesture of anticipatory "hope." The second part of the Negro spiritual melody "coming for to carry me home" is, for the first time, heard in measure 37 in the flute and organ.

The tenor solo enters with a simple folk-like melody, and almost immediately, Dett uses word-painting on the word "swinging." The hope on which the entire piece is based is stated in the next line, "comes God's promise of salvation," to which the chorus answers, "Amen." As the rhythmic pulse of the music intensifies, symbolizing the chariot's movement, we see Dett using the tenor solo as a counterpoint to the choir. I find the introduction from measures 1- 66 to be very effective with its broadly arching and entirely unified lament moving effortlessly to its culmination. The backdrop of the oratorio is now set, and all of the musical themes have been introduced.

After the introductory phrase's emphatic conclusion, the music now returns to its melancholic and more reflective frame of mind. It is unmistakable that Dett relished setting in antiphonal style, SA voices versus TB voices. At measure 68, this is the compositional tool employed (Figure 2). The tenors and basses state the melody of the spiritual on which Dett has based the piece. The melody of the first soprano line has the characteristics of a cantus firmus. The roles of the antiphonal choirs reverse at measure 76. The tenor soloist joins the female voices as the accompaniment thickens. The harmony here is over an e minor chord as opposed to the initial G major.

Another technique that Dett uses in measure 76 is an accompaniment that serves as harmonic counterpoint to the melody. In the choral score on which this new instrumentation was based, a new melody appears in the organ. That idea appears in the flute and oboe parts in this edition. The textual imagery in the soprano and alto lines in measures 82 and 83 is crystal clear (Figure 3 on page 32). "Swing" uses two slurred notes with a rocking feeling, and then the octave drop depicts the word "low." Another trait of Dett's writing is setting the solo voice as counterpoint to the choir. It is

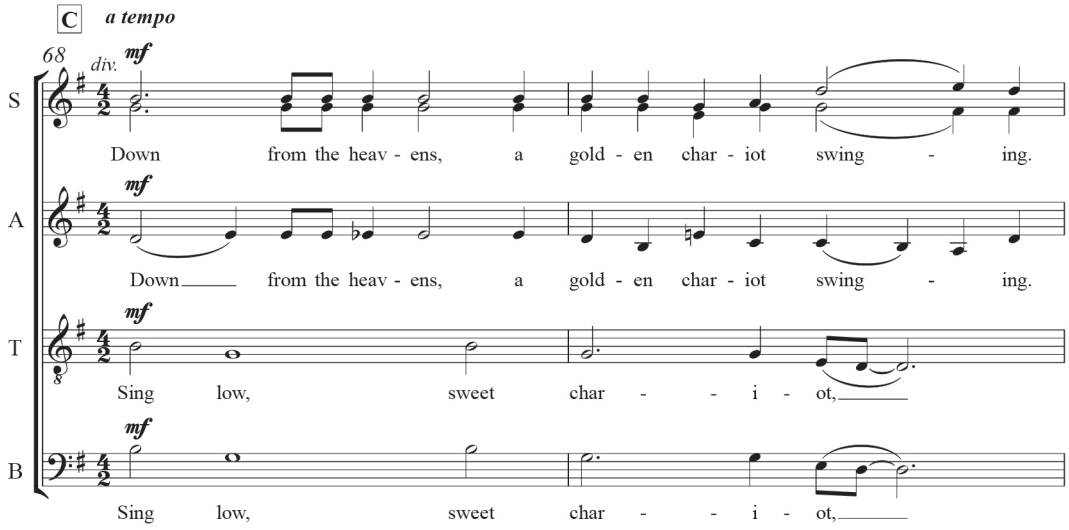

Figure 2. R. Nathaniel Dett, *The Chariot Jubilee,* mm. 68–69.
Edited by Jason Max Ferdinand.

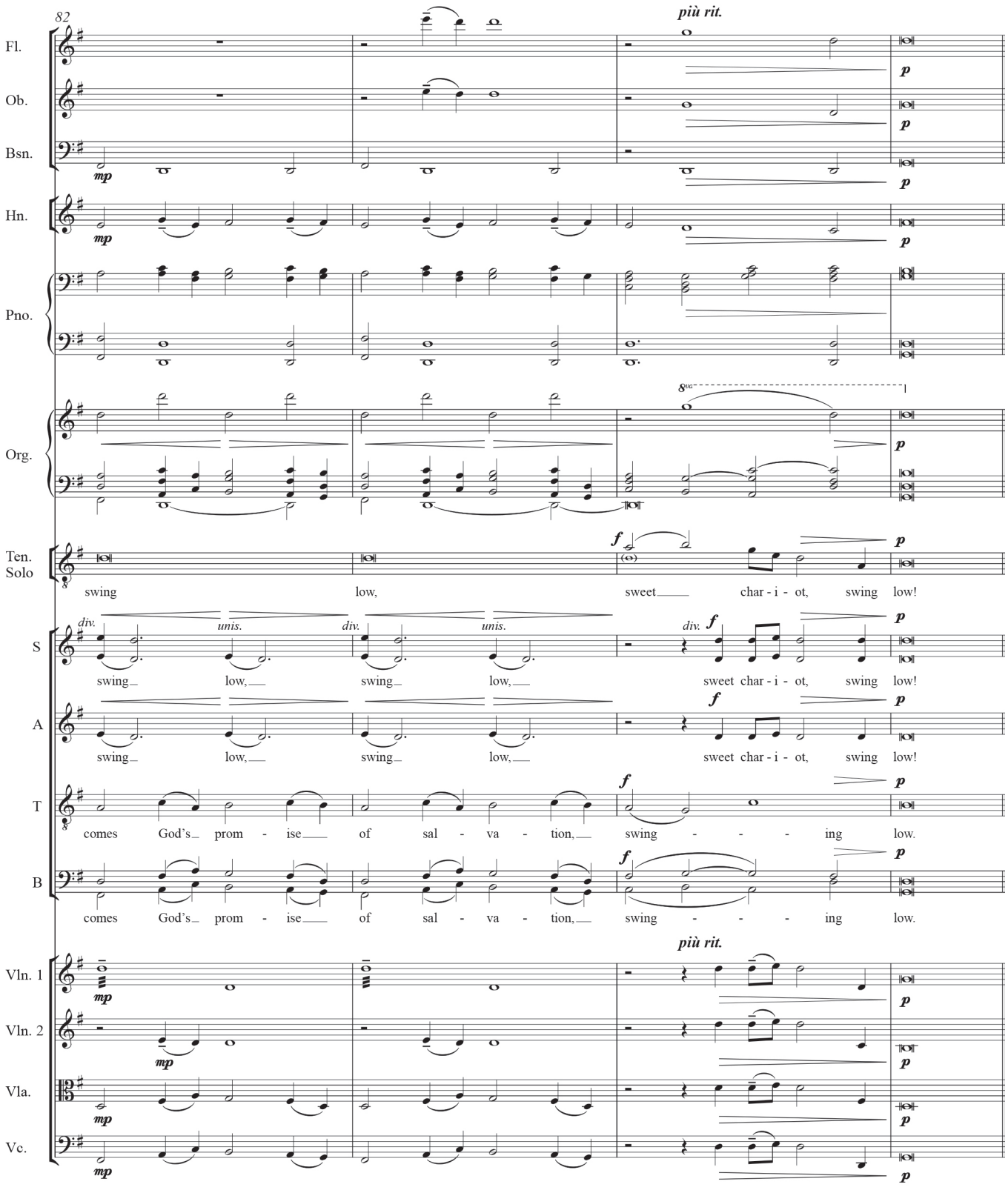

Figure 3. R. Nathaniel Dett, *The Chariot Jubilee,* mm. 82–85.
Edited by Jason Max Ferdinand.

seen here in measures 82-85 as the tenor serves as an obbligato voice.

The choir cleverly introduces the new text in measures 86 and 87 without any instrumental accompaniment. This simple technique is very effective in making the text plain. Of note is the musical and textual differentiation between "God" and "Lord." In measures 88 and 89, "God" is followed by a sudden instrumental hit on a G major chord. In measures 90-92, "Lord" is given a more horizontal accompaniment. Dett describes the Christian-based teaching that the "Lord" was the person sent to earth to carry out the plan of salvation as opposed to "God" who sits in heaven.

The next phrase, measures 95-122, is the longest of the piece; this is the development section where Dett expands the musical ideas that he previously introduced. In this passage, we see more frequently than in any other part of the piece tonality shifts, rhythmic changes, sweeping lyrical lines, tempo changes, and articulatory instructions. Instrumental parts are used here to contrast, to support, and to help dramatize the text. The point of structural significance is the contrapuntal texture created by the use of two antiphonal choirs between the female and male voices.

From the onset of the phrase at measure 95, we see Dett superimposing a two against three rhythmic pulsations. All the voice parts are singing different sections of the text "God made a covenant for the glory of His grace." This technique adds to the contrapuntal effect. At measure 97 and the downbeat of measure 98, we see a brief moment of unison in the voices, which is noteworthy as it is describing the three in one concept of "Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ." The music then quickly returns to a very lyrical nature reminiscent of Brahms with beautiful melodies and lush harmonies. Dett successfully makes use of word-painting on the phrase "flowing free." Dett sets the word "home" over an F# major chord at measure 102, and with the lon-

ger note value, it gives the listener a sense of a final destination. The sentiment is expressed again in the following two measures, however, with more emphasis as Dett indicates a slowing down of the tempo. The tonal center's unstable nature, coupled with the slower harmonic rhythm, makes for a very reflective aura.

The tonal center for this new section is D major. The new melody introduced at measure 123 is folk-like in nature and is heard distinctly in the soprano line (Figure 4). The female voices are entrusted with exalting the message of "salvation." Dett sets the female voices in simple harmonies that sometimes spread to four parts. In striking contrast, the tenor and bass voices are exhorting on the text "tell it." A conversational effect is created with the men admonishing the women to share with joy and excitement the story of "salvation." The accompaniment helps to punctuate the rhythmic vitality of the passage.

Suddenly at measure 131, the tenor soloist reappears in the style of a preacher giving the sermon appeal. With the introduction of the tenor solo, the choir is now set in a homophonic response on the text "sweet chariot, swing low!" At measure 133, the text is set in a recitative style. The recitative technique, in such a sudden manner, causes the listener to ponder the meaning of the text. In measure 137, extravagant use is made of embellishments that give the effect of improvisation (Figure 5 on page 35). The conclusion of this phrase, measures 145-147, is tonally unstable (Figure 6 on page 36).

Repetition deepens the impression, and Dett makes use of this tool between measures 148 and 157. The text, "God made a covenant for the glory of His grace," repeats over a dominant pedal between measures 148

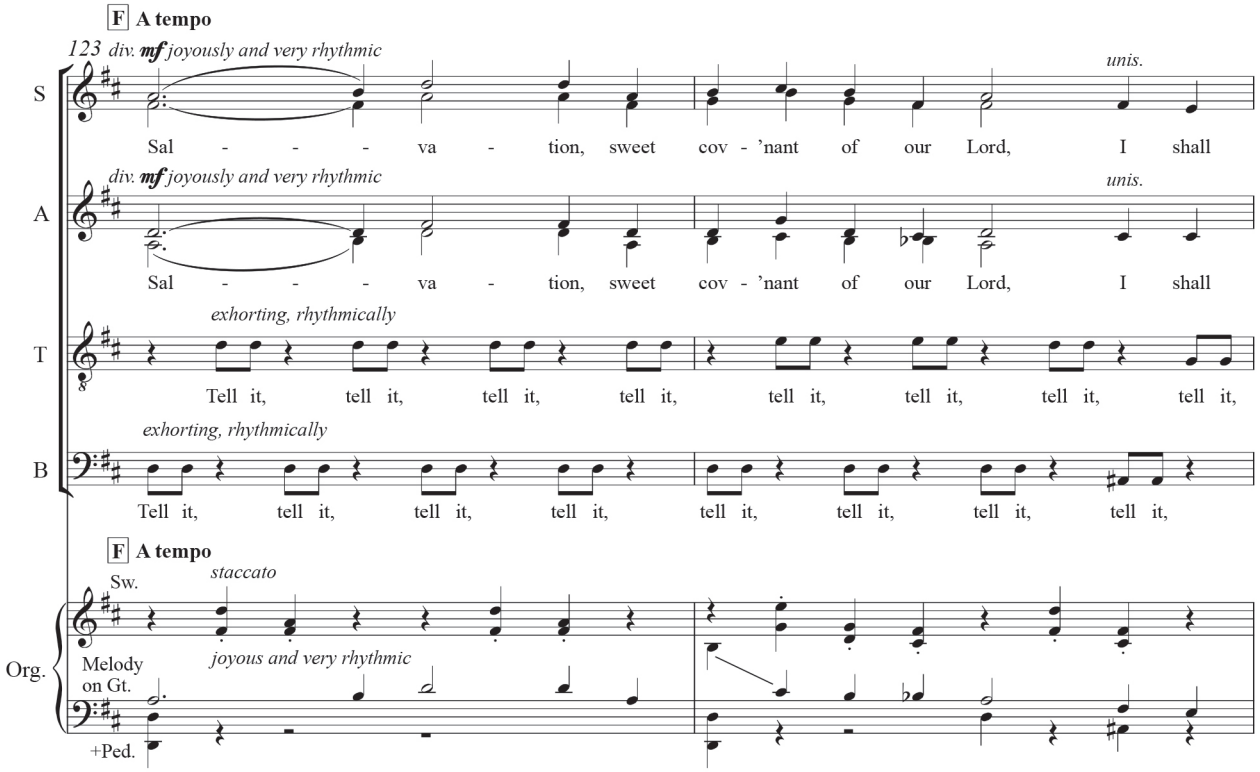

Figure 4. R. Nathaniel Dett, *The Chariot Jubilee,* mm. 123–124.
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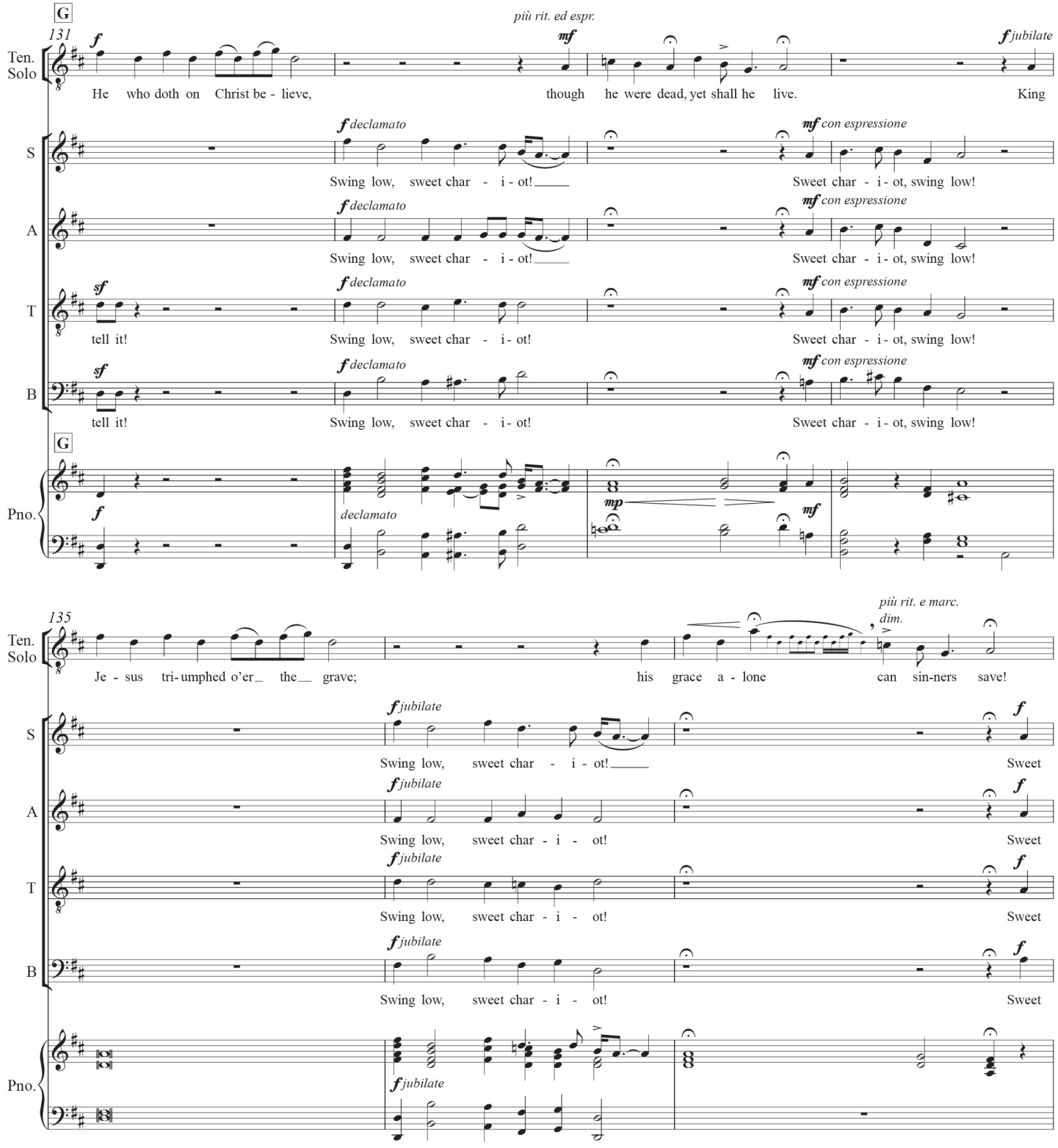

Figure 5. R. Nathaniel Dett, *The Chariot Jubilee,* mm. 131–137.
Edited by Jason Max Ferdinand.

and 151, followed by the partial reiteration of the text made over a tonic pedal between measures 152 and 155. The dominant pedal followed by the tonic pedal creating a strong unifying effect. At the change of text, "O hallelujah," the harmony goes back to the V tonal area. In measure 157, Dett uses a 4-3 suspension very effectively followed by a fermata in the alto voice.

At measure 158, the suspense is alleviated, and the complete spiritual melody harmonized, the first and only time we see this occurrence. The harmony is effortless and in rapport with the mood of the spiritual. The marking that Dett indicates, "molto meno mosso quasi grandioso," suggests that the tempo is slow, but stately. Text painting is employed on the word "home," which symbolizes heaven and the ascension of all parts depicts this at the end of the phrase (Figure 7 on page 37).

The next phrase, starting at measure 164, is six measures in length and though short, is a pivotal segue to the concluding musical passage. The tenor solo is declamatory as Dett has described the salvific theme of his oratorio for the very last time. The almost even musical arc is seen in measures 164 and 165, which could be indicative of the belief that salvation is attainable by all of humanity. The harmonic rhythm, in conjunction with the tempo and decreasing dynamic, is such that it gives the listener a sense of peaceful assurance. Dett overlaps this phrase with the upcoming conclusive statement. The downbeat of measure 169 ends the reflective passage, and then the second part of the first beat bursts into the final celebratory declaration (Figure 8 on pages 38 and 39).

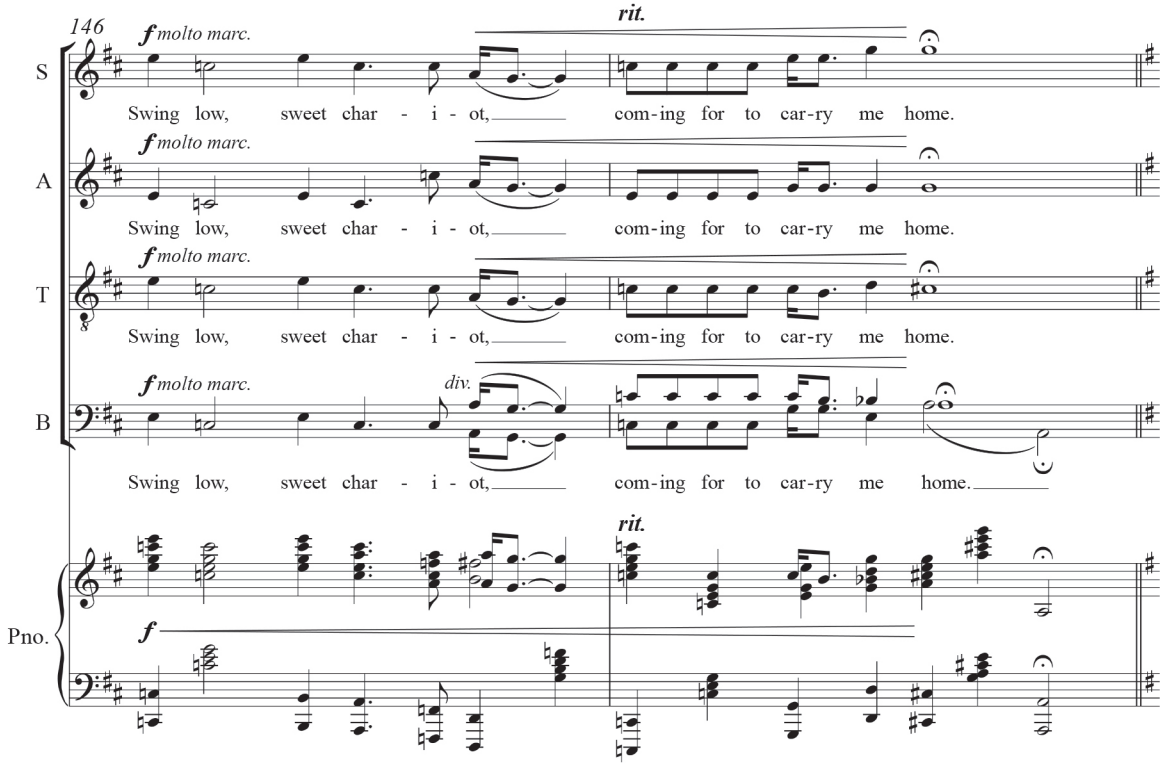

Figure 6. R. Nathaniel Dett, *The Chariot Jubilee,* mm. 146–147.
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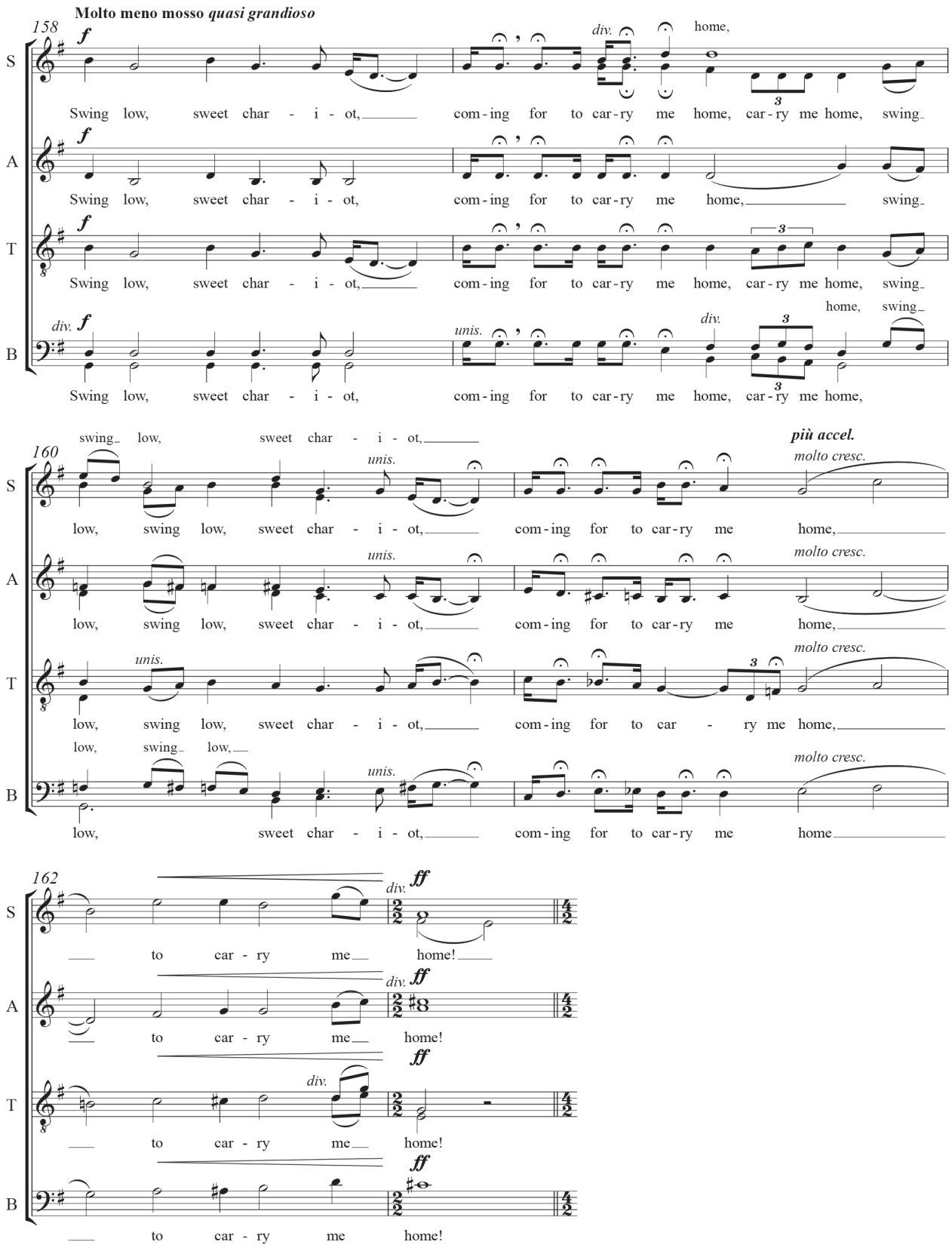

Figure 7. R. Nathaniel Dett, *The Chariot Jubilee,* mm. 158–163.
Edited by Jason Max Ferdinand.

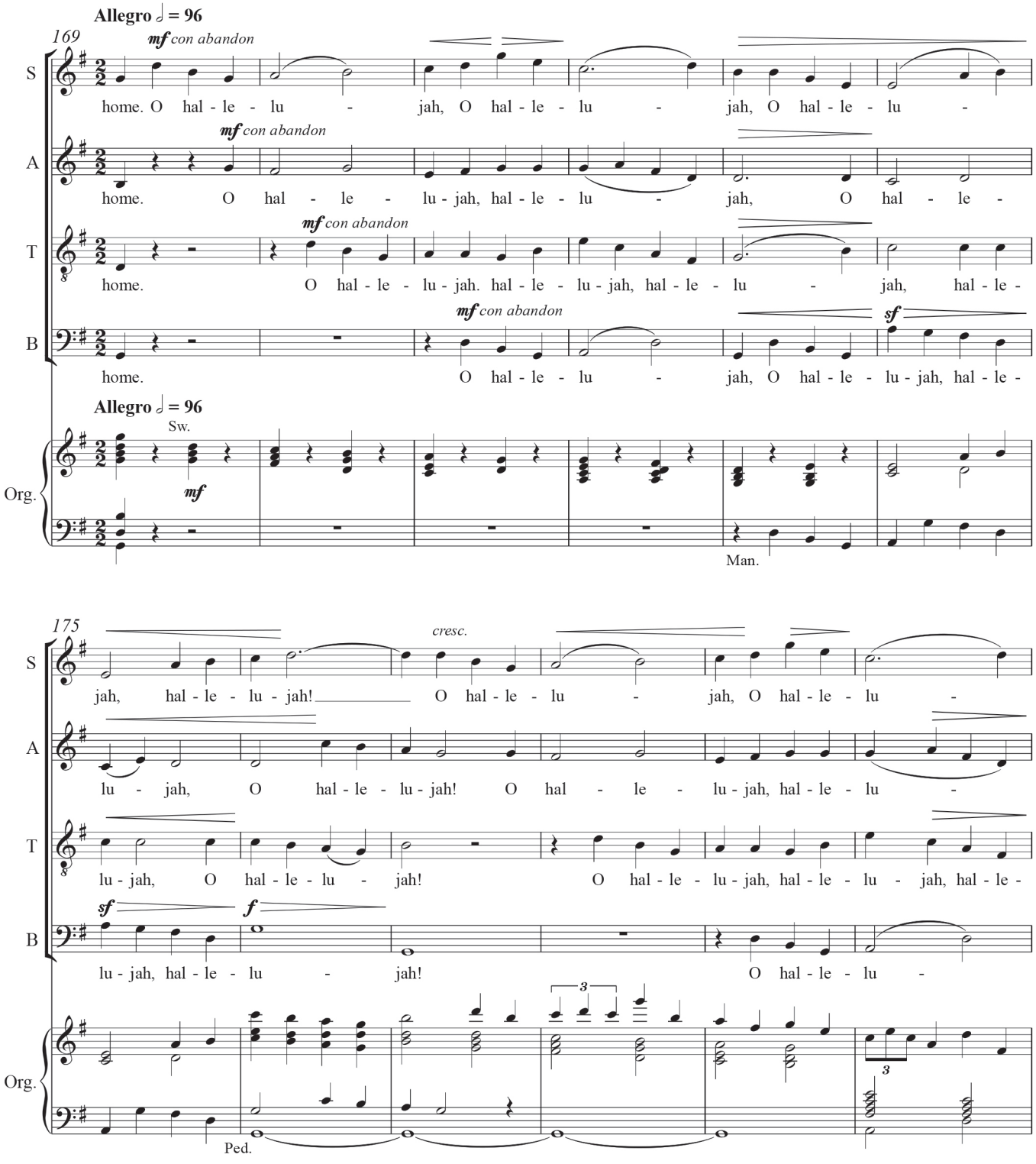

Figure 8a. R. Nathaniel Dett, *The Chariot Jubilee,* mm. 169–180.
Edited by Jason Max Ferdinand.

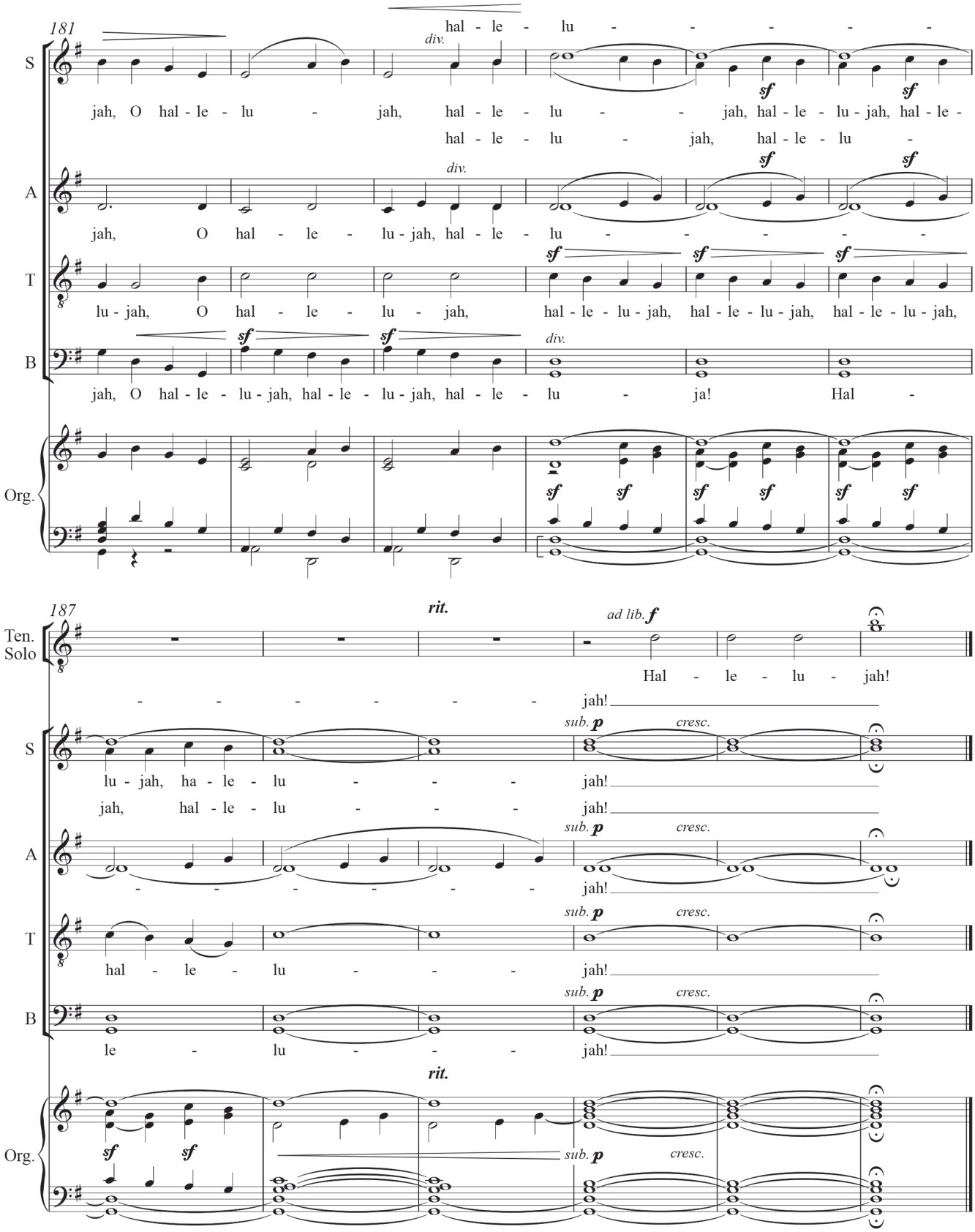

Figure 8b. R. Nathaniel Dett, *The Chariot Jubilee,* mm. 181–192.
Edited by Jason Max Ferdinand.

The final statement of the oratorio makes use of the text "O Hallelujah." The various entrances of the voice parts are like the members of a church responding to the preacher with resounding agreement. The joyous cacophony that would follow a great sermon in the African- American church is recreated here by Dett and his use of the term "con abandon," to alert the musicians to sing and play without restraint, reinforces this. In measure 184, a tonal pedal is used until the end of the piece. Of interest are the appoggiaturas in the alto and tenor lines. The appoggiaturas here are of rhythmic importance to the overall exuberance of this phrase.

The re-entry of the tenor soloist at the last three measures is an editorial decision. Throughout the oratorio, the tenor soloist serves the role as a leader, and that clarion voice seemed an appropriate addition to the end.

Conclusion

May 25, 2020, will forever be a murky day in American history. Every creed and race could identify with the stinging wound of social injustice. The very fabric of humanity was questioned, and people around the world took to the streets in response. Empathy has been on full display as we witness the myriad of races at the protests. The senseless killing of George Floyd has aroused our sensibilities in the choral world as well.

Comparably, Dett arose in the American musical scene at a time that scarily resembles our present circumstances. Our economy is in shambles, job opportunities are fleeting, and social injustices and cries of police brutality are commonplace. African Americans saw in Dett the epitome of excellence, both in his music and literary contributions. Through his work, they recognized a man from a similar background who was successful in a dominantly Caucasian society. Yet, Dett did not climb the ladder of recognition that he deserved.

History ought not to repeat itself. Dett was a polymath and, as a result, proved knowledgeable of society. He was always trying to bridge societal gaps. To be clear, he paid the price dearly even at the hands of his very own racial community, which was the case in his termination from Hampton Institute (now University). The fostering of racial harmony has to be practiced by all. As "second-line" workers, part of our responsibility is to have an insatiable curiosity about humankind. Seeking out worldviews of others with open hearts will allow us as artists to be more in tune with the needs of those around us. As "second-line" workers, we possess a unique tool in music. Our intentional efforts at sharpening our tools could lead to impacting societal reformation.

An examination of Dett's life reveals that many of his mentors did not share his racial identity. His charismatic personality and his pristine music making attracted by all accounts, varied audiences. *The Chariot Jubilee* has been performed, recorded, and appreciated by a broad cross-section of society. The story of the text is timeless in its content, for all can relate to a message of hope and desire for a better tomorrow. I offer all of you, my valued colleagues, an instrument for fostering racial harmony: *The Chariot Jubilee.* CJ

NOTES

[1] May Stanley, "R.N. Dett, of Hampton Institute, Helping to Lay Foundation for Negro Music of the Future," *Musical America* (July 2018): 17.

[2] Vivian Flagg McBrier, *R. Nathaniel Dett: His Life and Works, 1882-1943* (Washington D.C.: Association Publishers, 1977), 9.

[3] Frederick Marten, *Southern Workman* (Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, 1921), 664.

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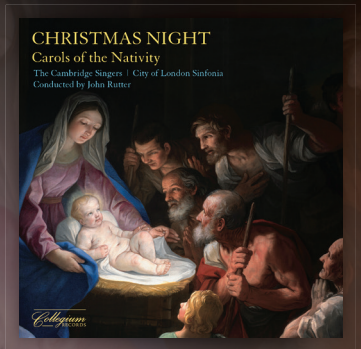

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HIS LIGHT STILL SHINES

An Artistic Style for Moses Hogan Spirituals

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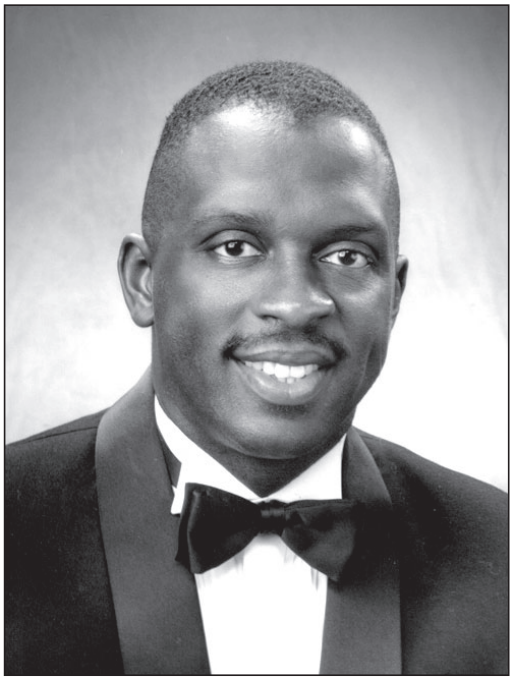


I was a pianist in the church, and it was a Baptist church, so there would be that element. I started as a classical pianist, and so there will be some classical element that you can relate to. I played the oboe for six years, and so in order to play the oboe I had to listen to the symphony orchestra, and that was my entrée to classical music…Then I lived in New Orleans, which is sort of a gumbo melting pot of all kinds of music…Therefore, my style emerges from those.

—Moses Hogan, 2002[1]

The arranged spiritual is a fixed, non-improvised form of the spiritual that originated in the mid to late nineteenth century in schools created to educate formerly enslaved people of African descent.[2] The performance of arranged spirituals contains more elements of Western performance ideals than the folk spiritual—"the earliest form of indigenous a cappella religious music created by African Americans during slavery"[3]—and a precursor to the arranged spiritual. Moses George Hogan, a pianist, arranger of spirituals, and choral conductor with a passion for preserving African American spirituals, was a major figure associated with the revitalization of the performance of arranged spirituals in the mid-1990s, and whose arrangements of spirituals are still featured on the concerts of choral ensembles around the world. This article will examine Hogan's spirituals, which embody his African American musical heritage and his training in Western art music.

The popularity of Moses Hogan's music is likely connected to the ways in which his musical background informed the creativity found in his arrangements. Both music of the African American Baptist church and jazz, historically attributed to African Americans, embody what Olly Wilson described as specific conceptual approaches to music making that are common in West African and African American musics: the organization of rhythm based on the principle of rhythmic and implied metrical contrast, singing or playing an instrument in a percussive manner, the use of call-and-response, a high density of musical events, and the tendency to incorporate body movements in the music making process.[4] The first four of these approaches are common in Moses Hogan spirituals.

Emily Akuno's model of creativity suggests that one's musical creativity is expressed as the sum of the interaction between culture (that which an individual absorbs directly from his or her environment) and information (knowledge and skills that are deliberately passed on to the individual).[5] According to this model, the influence of culture on Hogan's style of arranging include his years of observing and participating in the choir at an African American Baptist church, where he recalled hearing anthems, spirituals, gospel music, and metered hymns. He credited this experience for inspiring his interest in unaccompanied arrangements of spirituals.[6] A native of New Orleans, he also noted that jazz was a part of the soundscape of his childhood and was a minor influence on his style of arranging.

In addition to music present in his home church, Hogan's arrangements heavily reflect his six years as an oboist in school ensembles and his training at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, Oberlin Conservatory, Juilliard Conservatory, and Louisiana State University, which all align with Akuno's[7] description of information. The various influences on Hogan's style of arranging require the conscientious choral conductor to be aware of the deep connections to both African American music aesthetics and choral performance practices of the Western art tradition. Failure to address the influence of either would leave a performance of his spirituals unbalanced and inappropriate.

In my 2014 dissertation on an ideal sound for Moses Hogan spirituals,[8] I reviewed documents in the Moses Hogan archives at Tulane University, interviewed former members of the Moses Hogan Chorale and the Moses Hogan Singers, and interviewed expert choral conductors to determine an ideal sound for Moses Hogan spirituals and methods for achieving this sound. Participants specifically discussed topics of choral tone, diction, articulation, dynamics, intonation, tempo, rhythm, phrasing, expression, and improvisation. I compared these findings to my personal experience as a piano and theory student of Moses Hogan and as a member of both the Moses Hogan Chorale and the Moses Hogan Singers. The following findings and recommendations for rehearsal and performance are based on data collected and analyzed for that study. While this article does include a few recommendations that were suggested by study participants, the focus is on highlighting aspects of choral performance that should receive special attention when performing Hogan's spirituals. The specific manner of developing those skills should be left to the expertise of the conductor.

Choral Tone

An ideal choral tone for Moses Hogan spirituals was described by former members of his ensembles and expert choral conductors as warm, rich, round, dark, and heavy, with a slightly lighter tone used for fast pieces and darker sounds used on slow pieces. Hogan handpicked his ensemble members to include a mixture of younger and older voices, lighter and darker voices, all of which blended together to create a particular sound that Hogan desired for his arrangements. His method for creating a choral tone specific to his arrangements through the member selection process is context-specific. Singers must refrain from artificially altering the sound to produce exaggerated approximations of a dark choral tone.

There are additional characteristics of Hogan's ensembles one might consider for each section of the ensemble. In Hogan's arrangements, not only does the soprano line usually carry the melody, there are often very high *obbligato* parts written for the soprano voices. Sopranos in his ensembles would sing up to C6 with

relative ease while matching vowels and color with the rest of the section in that range. They also possessed a lyric quality and refrained from using a wide vibrato.

The alto line in Moses Hogan spirituals is the only one that is not featured regularly in solo lines; however, the tone of the alto section is important to effectively performing Moses Hogan spirituals. The characteristic warmth in the alto section supported the richness and warmth of the entire ensemble, a major component of Hogan's artistic style. With some parts that were as low as D3, he chose voices for this section that could sing comfortably in a wide range. They also possessed the strong musicianship necessary to maintain the inner notes of dense chords while still blending with the ensemble as a whole.

Like the sopranos, tenors had a wide range and were capable of singing easily in the upper part of their voices. The tenor line often carries a melody, and tenors were required to sing in a manner that would alternately feature the melody and blend in with the rest of the ensemble. Like the altos, tenors often held the inner notes of dense chords and had the aural skills to do so well.

The heavy tone of the bass section provided a solid foundation for the ensembles' tone. As a child, Hogan often sat in the bass section of the choir with his father, and that influence is seen in his music. The range of the bass section in his arrangements can be fairly low, and the section is often featured in small motives or as a countermelody. Because Hogan frequently used the basses to lead and support the ensemble, the voices of the bass section should have the versatility to quickly alternate between these two roles.

Breath Support

The Moses Hogan Chorale was formed in 1993 and comprised many well-respected, seasoned professional musicians from New Orleans. In 1999, Hogan phased out the Chorale and created the Moses Hogan Singers by integrating younger voices from around the country with some former members of the Chorale. According to several study participants, the Chorale's continued struggle to maintain intonation and control vibrato prompted this decision. One former member of both the Chorale and the Singers recalled, "When Moses was talking to me when he was in the process of starting the Singers…he said he had a vision to write more music and work on music sometimes the older members weren't able… their voices weren't as agile… as they used to be, and just keeping stuff in tune [was difficult since] his music is a cappella."

The ability to perform choral music well requires a well-trained vocal mechanism, and Hogan's arrangements are no exception. A major component of strong vocal technique is the ability to maintain proper breath support. Proper breath support is related to intonation and performing with a vibrato, which should not be overly pronounced in the performance of his music. Indeed, many of Hogan's works contain dense chords, and a heavy vibrato might hinder the clarity of the chords. He routinely asked his members to eliminate the vibrato in their voices, and he likely did this for different reasons with the Chorale and the Singers. Although the Chorale had the tone he wanted at the time, some of the older members had wider vibratos and had trouble maintaining proper intonation. He addressed this by asking them to sing without vibrato. In the case of the Moses Hogan Singers, the voices were generally younger, but most had been trained for solo performing careers and were accustomed to singing to be heard alone rather than to blend with an ensemble. With a limited amount of time for rehearsals with the latter of the two of ensembles (usually a day or two before performances or recordings), he asked the Singers to sing without vibrato to create the most unified sound possible in a short period of time.[9]

Diction and Dialect

Moses Hogan began with the text when writing his arrangements, making diction of high importance when preparing an ensemble to perform his music. He stated that the rhythmic nature of his pieces was inspired by the text, therefore the relationship of the text and rhythm should always be considered. One study participant noted that Hogan was "really specific about diction when the diction influenced the rhythm of the piece."[10] In several Moses Hogan pieces, word painting is used to highlight various aspects of the text.

The most frequently cited example of this is in "Battle of Jericho" (Figure 1), where consonants used in the tenor and bass sections are pitted against consonants sung in the soprano and alto sections to create the feeling of a battle. Another example is found in "Wade in the Water" (Figure 2 on page 47), where the contour of the phrases and the dynamics imitate waves of water.

In a related vein, dialect is a topic of great interest in the performance of spirituals. Hogan chose members who had experience with some form of African American vernacular language, who were trained in English diction, and who had performed spirituals. The combination of these three sets of experiences allowed the performers to use their classical training while judiciously incorporating elements of the African American vernacular in performance. I believe this is why there is little indication of how the words should be pronounced in his earlier arrangements. Later arrangements tend to contain more detailed information about how dialect should be approached, a deliberate move by Hogan after he realized that his lack of attention to dialect confused some conductors and ensemble members. Because there

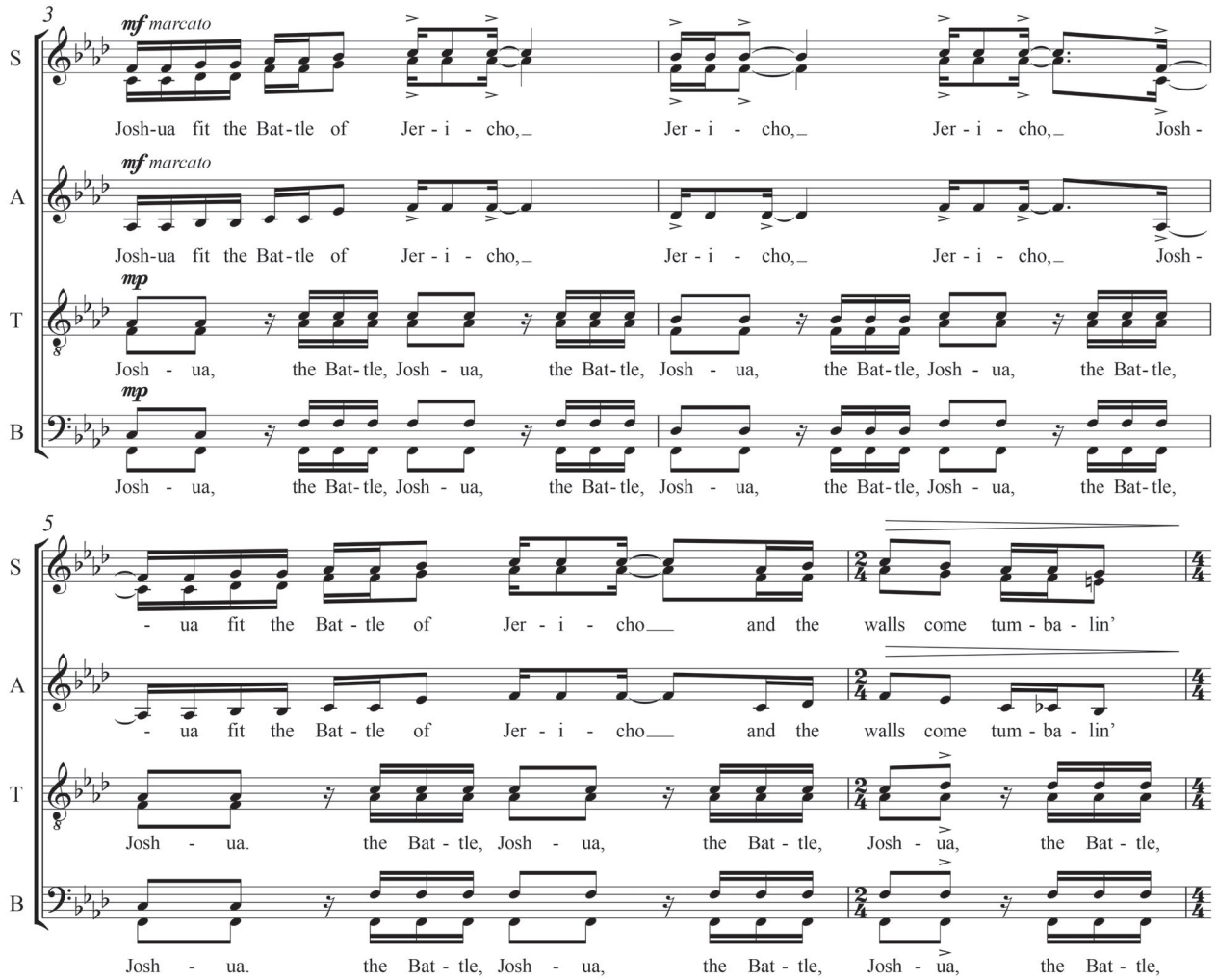


Figure 1. Moses Hogan, *Battle of Jericho,* mm. 3–6.

was almost no indication on how Hogan addressed dialect in his rehearsal, following are some general recommendations from expert choral conductors interviewed for the study.

Performing dialect in spirituals include using Marshall's[11] rules of diction for the article "the" when using dialect. When a "d" is substituted for "th" in the word "the," it should be pronounced as [di] before a vowel sound and as [də] before a consonant sound. For example, in the phrase "ride up in de chariot," one would pronounce the article "de" as [də]. In the phrase "chatter wit de angels," one would pronounce the same article "de" as [di]. Words ending on an "ng" sound should use a barely articulated or nasalized "n" sound. Ending "t" sounds should stop short of being plosive and be approached closer to a "d" sound. This should only be done when the result will not hinder the clarity of the text.

Care should be taken to not over-pronounce words. Familiarity with the speech represented in dialect is important, because songs performed with dialect should follow the natural flow of speech. The same attention given to English, Italian, French, and German diction should also be given to dialect. Knowledge of English diction is not sufficient for performing dialect; certain rules that apply to English diction might not apply to dialect. In addition to the recommendations above, listen to one of the many recordings of Hogan's ensembles, as these contain the sound he aimed to represent in his scores. As with any spiritual, the use of dialect should flow within and not impede the performance of Moses Hogan spirituals.

Dynamics

In general, dynamics in Moses Hogan spirituals are indicated explicitly in the score. Often changes in dynamics can be very drastic, are used for dramatic effect, and serve to augment aspects of the score that are designed to shape the story of the piece. An ensemble will likely visit a wide range of dynamics in one arrangement of Moses Hogan spirituals. Hogan was especially particular about the way in which *pianissimos* were performed in his ensembles and would often ask his singers to deliver the softest sound possible at appropriate points. One study participant remarked, "Sometimes we'd hum it or 'oo' so low down, I'd be wondering, 'Am I still singing? Did my voice cut off?' You'd be scared to come back in!"

In Figure 3 on page 48 (Abide with Me, measures 40-44), the *mezzo piano* in all parts gradually diminishes to a *pianissimo* in the last measure (the *pianissimo* is not specifically stated in the score, but the recording of this piece as well as my recollection of multiple performanc-

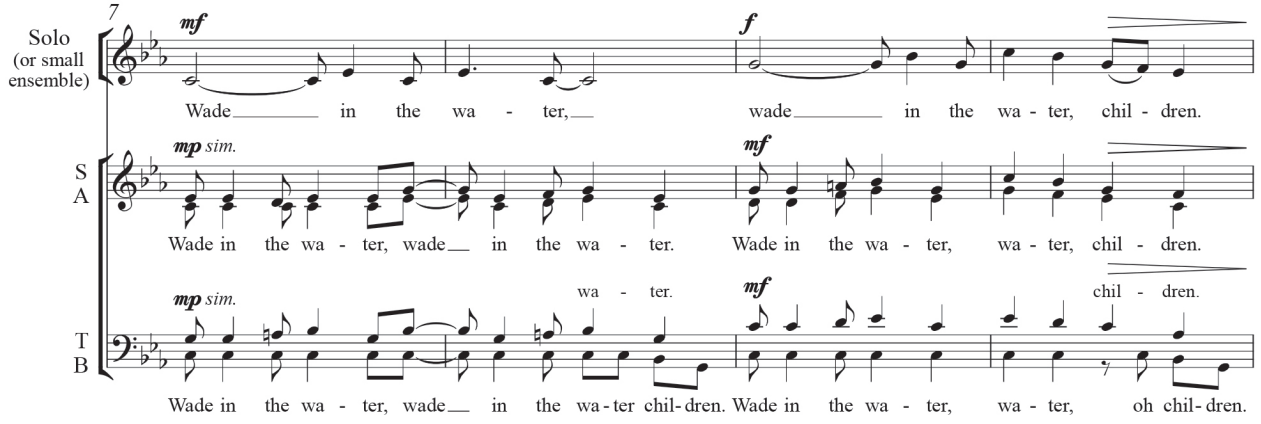


Figure 2. Moses Hogan, *Wade in the Water,* mm. 7–10.

es with his ensembles show this was the expectation). When performing Moses Hogan's arrangements, note that *pianissimos* should be taken to the extreme. Taking *pianissimos* to the extreme in Moses Hogan spirituals supports feelings of tension and resolution indicated by the notes and rhythm and enhances the total performance experience.

Rhythm

One of the more complicated aspects of Moses Hogan's arrangements is the rhythm. The voices can alternately imitate the patterns of drums, the sound of a shout, the movement of wheels, or a battle cry, each accomplished partially by using complex rhythms. Understanding how all the rhythms work together to create a complete tapestry of sound can aid choirs in performing the complex rhythms often present in Hogan's arrangements.

Rhythmic notation represents how the music is to be performed, but there is always an underlying pulse to Hogan's arrangements that is most prominent in faster pieces. This can be as simple as a lilting feel to as complex as layered rhythmic cells. Once an ensemble has learned how to read the notes, they must develop sensitivity to the underlying pulse of the arrangement. In other words, they must *feel* the rhythm.

I recall practicing one of Hogan's earlier, simpler arrangements during a dress rehearsal for a performance with the Chorale. In response to a lackluster performance of the song, Hogan asked us to feel the song as if we were in a church service. He clapped his hands, patted his foot, and slightly bounced in a way that was reminiscent of an old, African American Baptist church. Immediately, we began to sing the piece with a renewed energy. This is just one example of moving beyond notation to capture the feel of the music.

One way Hogan illustrated the underlying pulse of the rhythm is by using accents in his music. In pieces such as "I'm Gonna Sing 'til the Spirit Moves in My Heart" (Figure 4 on page 49) and "Ev'ry Time I Feel the Spirit," (Figure 5 on page 49) accents mark

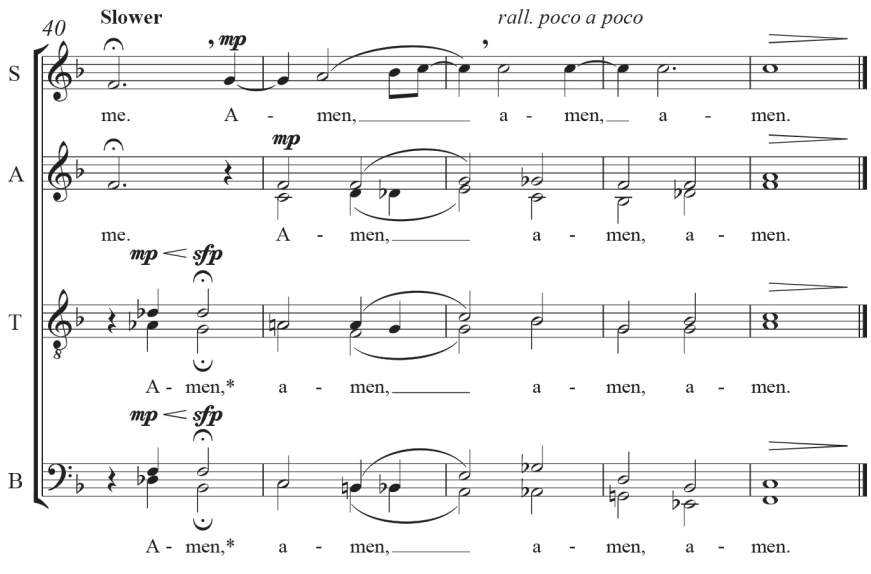


Figure 3. Moses Hogan, *Abide With Me,* mm. 40 – 44.

an underlying rhythm for different vocal lines. When each section is familiar with the accents in their vocal line and they perform them as such, arrangements with complicated polyrhythms lose the feeling of overwhelming complexity and the underlying feeling that Hogan created with polyrhythms emerges.

Unless indicated in the score, there should be no swinging of the rhythm. Although this may be appropriate in some genres and perhaps a convention used in other spirituals, it is not a practice he employed with his own choirs. Roland Carter, noted choral conductor, arranger of spirituals, and who served as a mentor to Hogan offered the following insight: "So many people approach spirituals with the idea, 'Oh, we gotta swing it. Put just a little before the beat.' I think that is deadly… For the most part we have written down what we wanted and if you want to do your arrangement, then do your own arrangement."

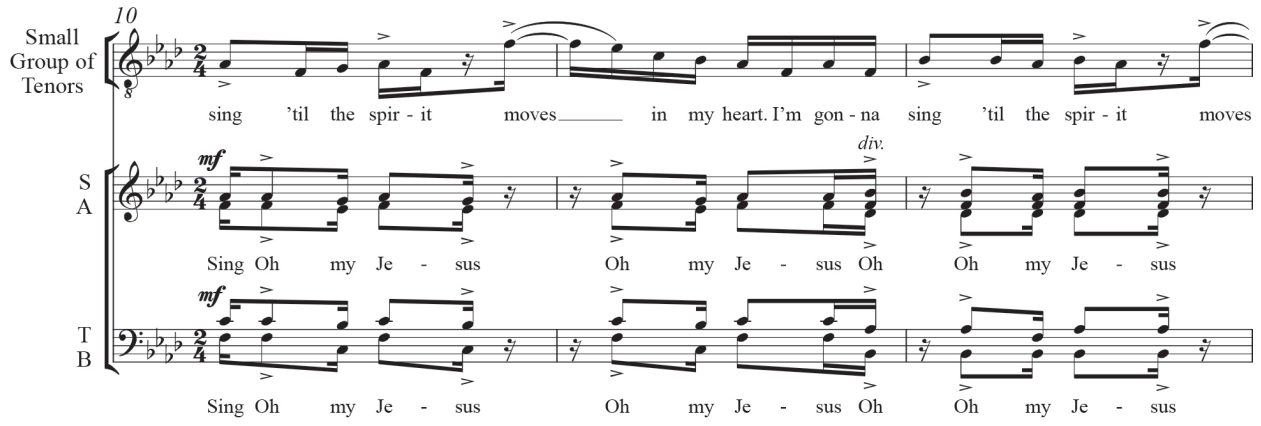


Figure 4. Moses Hogan, *I'm Gonna Sing 'til the Spirit Moves in My Heart* mm. 10–12.

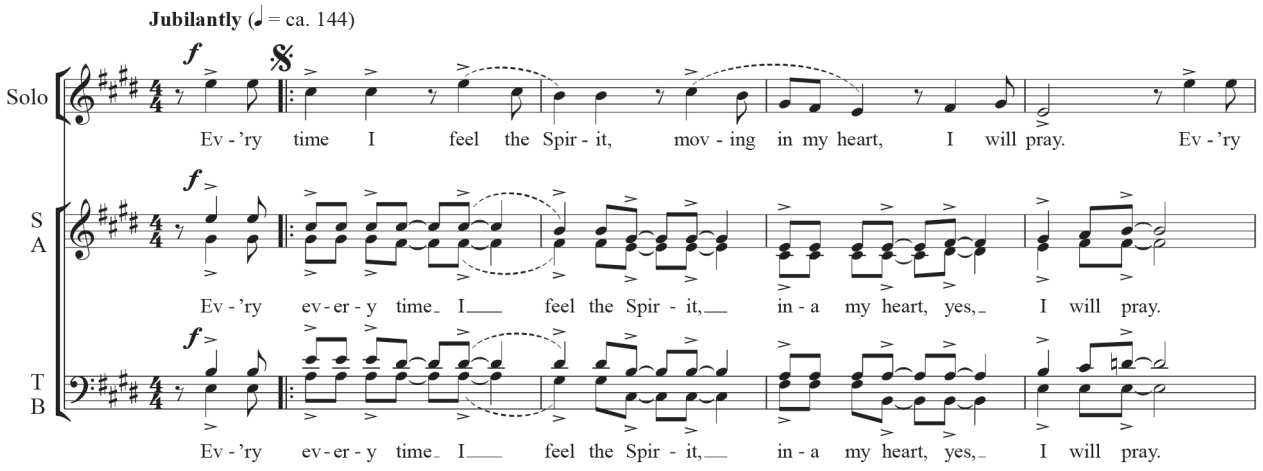


Figure 5. Moses Hogan, *Ev'ry Time I Feel the Spirit,* mm. 1–4.

Phrasing

At times Hogan would also add repeated phrases for dramatic effect, with the intention that each should be performed differently. There was a natural arc to the repeated phrases, which at times appeared in sets of three. The first of the three would serve as an introduction, usually performed at *mezzo piano* or *mezzo forte*. The next would be performed with more intensity and might be indicated by a change in dynamics or pitch. The final phrase would be performed at either the same dynamic level as the first phrase, slightly softer, or would be marked with a *diminuendo*. Occasionally there would be a phrase inserted between the second and third repeated phrase, yet the arc of the three repeated phrases should remain the same. Many repeated phrases in Hogan's early spirituals can be approached in this manner.

Moses Hogan ensemble members recalled that one of the most challenging aspects of phrasing was executing the breath. The phrases in Hogan's scores can be very long, and Hogan expected them to be performed as written (see Figure 3). One participant joked, "We never did breathe. There's your phrasing!" but Hogan's ensemble members would usually coordinate among themselves to stagger their breathing during very long phrases whether or not the directive was given from Hogan.

Expression

Hogan used the combination of the elements of choral performance addressed in this article in expression. It was not a separate element but interwoven into all aspects of performance. Few would dispute that the history of spirituals is deep and rich and is simultaneously a remnant of a horrific chapter in American history. Choral conductors who choose to perform Hogan's spirituals must find a way to connect singers with the history of the pieces if they truly wish to attain Hogan's artistic style. The texts of spirituals can contain hidden meanings and an understanding of those meanings is important in performing Hogan's spirituals. For instance, it is often noted that some spirituals were not simply religious texts but were codes for enslaved people to communicate secretly with each other. Understanding the underlying meanings in spirituals, as well as the historical, cultural, and social context of their development and dissemination, will aid conductors and students alike in interpreting spirituals.

Singers can also be encouraged to develop a personal story to assist them in connecting to the message of the piece. Although the original context of the folk spiritual is context specific, there are some aspects of the songs to which singers can connect their personal stories. This is not to equate any modern American experience to that of being enslaved; in singing music that is based on spirituals, however, one might relate to feelings of loneliness and longing, moments of joy, connection with a higher power, and other sentiments expressed in spirituals. By doing so, performers will be better able to express the essence of the spiritual.

Former ensemble members shared that although expression was important to Hogan, he did not spend much time addressing it. This element of performance came naturally for them, as he used aforementioned aspects of choral performance (e.g., choral tone, diction, rhythm, tempo, dynamics, and phrasing) as a medium to express the sentiment of a piece. Under his direction, expression was not just an element of choral performance, it was a goal.

Other Considerations

Improvisation. Moses Hogan was very specific about how his arrangements should be performed. Although some conductors may incorporate improvisation in their performances of spirituals, improvisation on Hogan's arrangements are not in line with his artistic style, and improvisation should be avoided in the performance of his arrangements of spirituals.

Recordings. Hogan was deliberate about making recordings of as many of his arrangements as possible, and the process would take several hours over the course of two or more days. In the recording sessions, Hogan was very particular about all the aforementioned aspects of choral performance. He often recorded the same piece several times over several years, working more and more toward the perfect performance. It is highly recommended that one listens to Moses Hogan's own recordings to understand his artistic style.

A Visual Model of the Artistic Style for Moses Hogan Spirituals

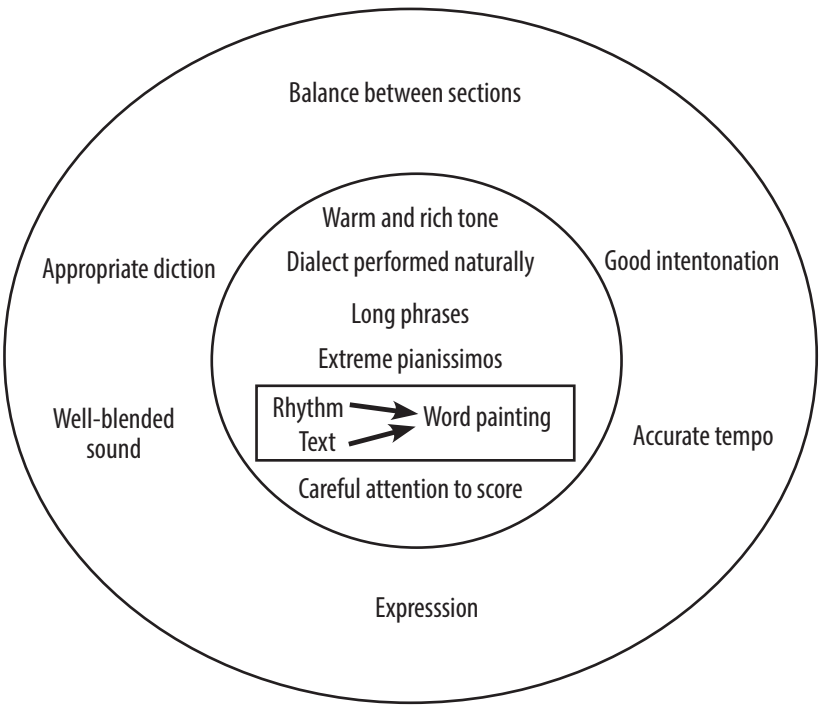
Some elements of choral performance are more important than others in the performance of Hogan's spirituals. This principle is represented in Table 1. Most choirs of the American choral tradition would strive to produce appropriate diction and a well-blended sound; to achieve balance between sections, good intonation, and expression; and to follow an accurate and appropriate tempo. These are not unique to Hogan's artistic style and are found in the outermost circle.

The inner circle of the diagram contains elements that were important to Hogan, but may not have been of similar significance in other arrangements or for other ensembles. Those values, in increasing order of importance, include the production of a warm and rich tone, dialect performed naturally, special consideration for long phrases, extreme pianissimos, rhythm and text used in word painting, and careful attention to the score.

Conducting Style

Certain aspects of Hogan's artistic style were produced in an organic manner by his members. His first groups, the New World Ensemble and the Moses Hogan Chorale, comprised mainly Western-trained African American musicians from the Deep South. All of his subsequent groups grew from that core, and new members, most of whom came from similar backgrounds, adjusted to the style of the group. Study participants indicated that much of this adaptation to his style occurred through recommendations from fellow section members, a point to which I can also attest. I propose that intensive work on certain aspects of choral performance specific to his arrangements was not necessary because of shared cultural and musical understandings among his members and guidance from veteran members that took place within the ensemble. There were, however, some remarks on Hogan's style of directing his ensembles I will share.

Table 1. A Visual Model of Moses Hogan's Artistic Style



The primary manner in which Hogan communicated his artistic style was through verbal communication. He would describe the sound, play examples on the piano, tell singers what he wanted them to do, and give swift and direct critique when anything was not to his liking. In addition, he used lots of repetition, sometimes focusing on just a few measures for very long periods of time.

His conducting gestures were minimal, but his body movements were instrumental in conveying desired aspects of performance. They were so integral to his conducting that seven of the ten former ensemble members in my study commented on it unprompted. I recall a dress rehearsal for an upcoming performance, where the Chorale kept rushing an up-tempo piece. He stopped the rehearsal and was obviously frustrated. A veteran member of the Chorale broke the tension by loudly proclaiming, "Follow the hips!" After the laughter died down, we resumed our rehearsal and "followed the hips" with no more tempo issues. His body movements were sufficient to keep the Chorale moving as a unit.

His facial expressions gave clear indications about his assessment of the performance. In one concert, one might read delight, intense concentration, and displeasure among a myriad of other sentiments. One participant remembered, "His eyes would kill on stage if something was to happen with us on stage." Another recalled that, "If we were going too fast, he made us keenly aware because his eyes would bulge." Through minimal hand gestures, body movements, and facial expressions, Hogan developed his own way of communicating with his ensembles.

Conclusion—His Light Still Shines

On February 11, 2003, the world of choral music lost a great presence when Moses Hogan passed away, however Hogan left a strong legacy of excellence in arranging and performing African American spirituals. The fact that choirs around the world continue to honor his work is a testament to the depth of his impact, but his legacy extends beyond the performance of African American spirituals. His work inspired later arrangers and composers to compose and arrange music rooted in their own cultural heritage and demonstrated how that music could be performed and appreciated internationally. The popularity of his arrangements has continued to grow since his death and shows little signs of slowing. Although there are many who interpret Hogan's spirituals, there is often debate about the validity of various interpretations. It is doubtful that those discussions will cease; however, these considerations are presented as a research-based contribution to the various arguments and to provide choral conductors and ensemble members alike with information regarding the history and artistic style of Moses Hogan. Forty years after he first began arranging spirituals, Moses Hogan's light still shines—wherever his works are performed, whenever audiences are moved to tears or roaring applause by one of his arrangements, and whenever the contribution and value of African American spirituals is recognized. CJ

NOTES

[1] Moses G. Hogan, interview with Kathy Romey, 2002.

[2] Mellonee V. Burnim, "Spirituals," in *African American Music: An Introduction,* 2nd ed., (New York: Routledge, 2015), 62.

[3] Emily A. Akuno, "A Conceptual Framework for Research in Music and Music Education within a Cultural Context," *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* no. 147 (Winter 2000/2001): 3-8.

[4] Olly Wilson, "The Heterogeneous Sound Ideal in African-American Music" in *New Perspectives on Music Essays in Honor of Eileen Southern* (Warren, Michigan: Harmonie Park Press, 1992).

[5] Emily A. Akuno, "A Conceptual Framework for Research," 54.

[6] Moses Hogan, interview by Kathy Romey, 2002.

[7] Emily A. Akuno, "A Conceptual Framework."

[8] Loneka Wilkinson Battiste, "Music Down in My Soul: Achieving a Sound Ideal for Moses Hogan Spirituals" (Ph.D. diss., Louisiana State University, 2014).

[9] I share this with the understanding that this is a highly debated technique in choral music. It is not meant as a recommendation, but rather has a description of what occurred in Hogan's ensembles.

[10] Loneka Wilkinson Battiste, "Music Down in My Soul."

[11] Madeleine Marshall, *The Singer's Manual of English Diction* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1953).

From the *Choral Journal* archives…

The February 2004 issue of *Choral Journal* featured an article titled "The Centenary Year of Undine Smith Moore: Dean of Black Women Composers" by Philip Brunelle (see pages 39-41).

This article was published in the centenary year of her birth (1904). The introduction states: "On this significant anniversary, it is worthwhile to examine her life and enduring musical legacy."

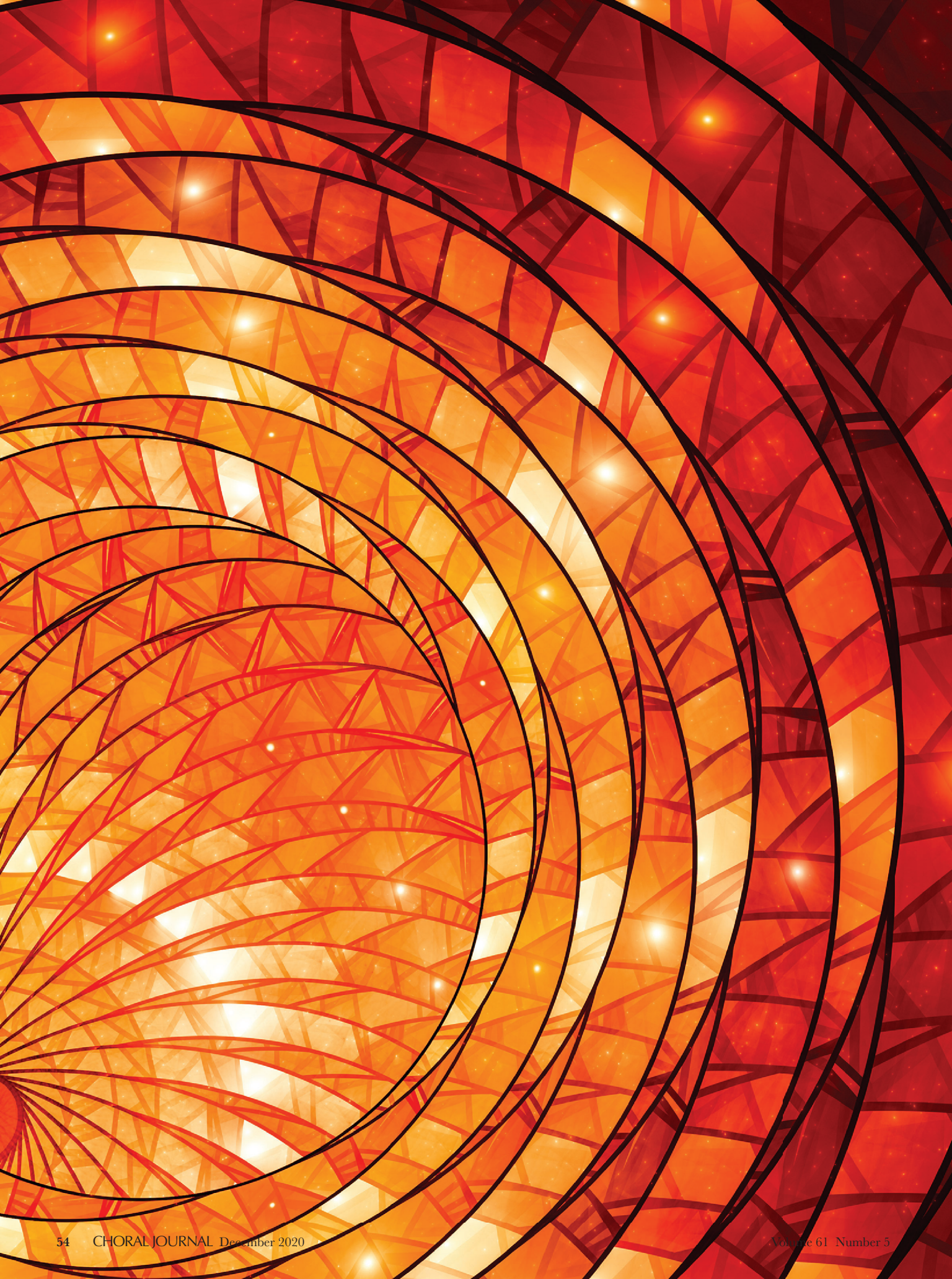
Other articles of interest:

"A Brief Analysis of Masses by Black Composers: Baker, Bonds, Ray, and Walker," by André J. Thomas (December 1986, pages 7-11)

This article offers an introduction to compositions by four twentieth-century black composers: David Baker, Margaret Bonds, Robert Ray, and George Walker

"Choral Works by African-American Composers," by Lee V. Cloud (September 1992, pages 44-48)

This article contains a suggested list of folk songs or hymns, not including arrangements of spirituals or gospel music.



An American Mass: Celebrating Our Shared Music In An Ancient Form

Carlton E. Kilpatrick III

The Mass is a treasured form in the Western canon of music and liturgy. A celebration of the sacrifice offered for the forgiveness of sins in the early Christian faith, it is still part of the worship in modern Catholic denomination. Settings of these ancient texts have been continuously performed both in liturgy and in concert for hundreds of years. From plainchant settings by anonymous monks to the high drama of majestic settings by Mozart, Beethoven, and Haydn for chorus, soloists, and orchestra, the Mass text continues to provide inspiration for composers. Mass settings appear less frequently among the non-idiomatic compositions of Black composers. Marques Garrett's online resource of "Non-Idiomatic Choral Music of Black Composers"[1] identifies fifteen, only a few of which utilize the forces of mixed choir and orchestra. When the search is stretched to idiomatic music, defined here as gospel, spirituals, jazz, hip-hop, and rap (among others), more examples exist, including the well-known *Gospel Mass* composed in 1978 by Robert Ray.

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In that same year, André Thomas, a first-year doctoral student at the University of Illinois–Champaign–Urbana, performed as a pianist and singer in the premiere performances of Robert Ray's newly composed *Gospel Mass*.[2] Some forty years later, Thomas would find himself surrounded by signs that he should pursue a Mass project of his own. The resulting work blends both the idiomatic and non-idiomatic aspects of Thomas's compositional oeuvre, resulting in a work that is in his unique voice—an American voice.

About Mass

Mass: A Celebration of Love and Joy is written in a Missa Brevis format with a complete *Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus,* and *Agnus Dei* in English translation (Table 1).[3] Utilizing the Mass movements as a framework, Thomas incorporates other scriptural texts into the work freely. The length of the work is approximately twenty-five minutes. Each movement can be performed as a stand-alone piece. This *Mass* is set for SATB voices with some divisi. The choir will find much to enjoy, and much to challenge them. The challenges are primarily in the colorful gospel and jazz harmonies and some complex rhythmic structures. The use of 9th and 11th chords is common. Thomas makes frequent use of a specific chord (1-♭3 or 6-5-♭7-+8) in all his works and it appears in the *Mass* as well (Figure 1 on page 57). Thomas's signature playful rhythms are featured throughout the piece. The use of syncopation is consistent.

Stylistically, the *Mass* is a pastiche of Thomas's many compositional interests. To call it a "gospel mass" is a misnomer. Though there are suggestions of influence from Ray's *Gospel Mass* and a healthy dose of gospel style, particularly in the deployment of the solo voices, the piece also suggests Thomas's spiritual arrangements as well as his original compositional ideas.

Table 1. ***Mass: A Celebration of Love and Joy***

Movement	Duration	Key	Soloist
Kyrie	3:40	dm-FM-CM	T solo (optional S solo)
Gloria	4:05	GM-gm-GM	S solo
Credo	4:55	CM	T solo
Sanctus	3:50	CM-cm	T and S or A solo
Agnus Dei	4:40	CM-FM-CM-BbM	T Solo

Full Instrumentation	2 fl, ob, ob/eh, 2 cl, 2 bn, 4 hn, 3 tpt, 3 tbn, tba, timp, 2 perc, drum set, piano, strings
Chamber Instrumentation	fl, ob, cl, bn, 2 hn, 2 tpt, tbn, bass tbn, timp, 2 perc, drum set, piano, strings, electric bass
Trio Instrumentation	piano, electric bass, drum set

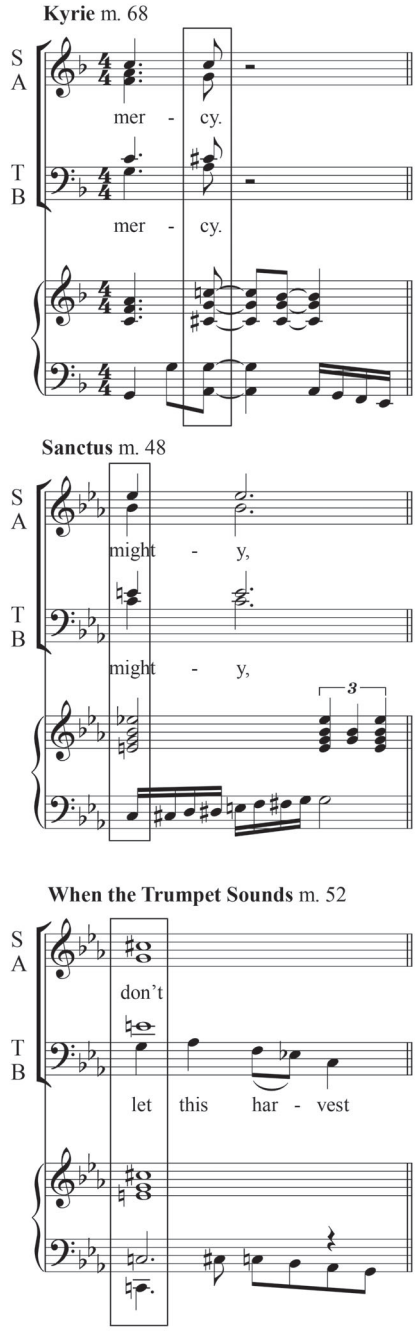


Figure 1. André J. Thomas, *Mass: A Celebration of Love and Joy.* Signature "Thomas" chord examples

The work encompasses his experience with Western sacred and secular music, traditional gospel styles, and settings of the spirituals of the African slaves. The styles are blended freely, just as the slaves blended their native music with their captors' music. The result is best described as a truly "American" Mass. It is a unique blending of cultural experiences from the ancient Christian church, to Black church traditions in the southern United States, to the earliest concertized spirituals performed by the Fisk Jubilee Singers, to the grand tradition of choral-orchestral masterworks societies across the globe.

Movement by Movement

The piece begins with an intense setting of the *Kyrie.* In performance, Thomas added ghostly "oohs" and "Oh Lord!" improvisations for the soprano soloist over the initial accompaniment measures and in between the chorus' rhythmic statements of the *Kyrie* theme.[4] The composer suggests the use of *staccati* on the sixteenth notes in the opening measures with a strong emphasis on the final two syllables of "eleison."[5] At m. 12, strong emphasis can be placed on the words "mercy on us."

The tenor soloist introduces new material that directly quotes Thomas's much-loved *Where Shall I Be When the Trumpet Sounds?*[6] which incorporates melodic and rhythmic material from the spiritual, *Sinner, Please Don't Let This Harvest Pass*[7] (Figure 2 0n page 58). This spiritual is thought to have been used as a message song to slaves about to attempt escape via the Underground Railroad.[8] In the original version, the title stanza is repeated three times: "Sinner, please don't let this harvest pass…" and the chilling conclusion, "and die and lose your soul at last." Even though they may have been afraid of the journey, it was essential to take advantage of the opportunity—an interesting juxtaposition with the *Kyrie* text. The spiritual has been arranged by William Grant Still, Margaret Bonds, Florence Price, and Mark Butler, among others.

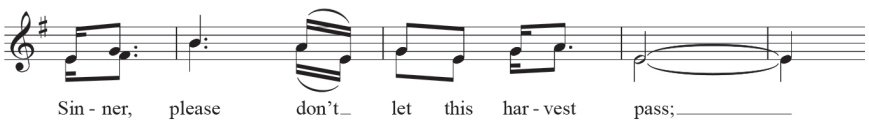
Thomas asks the chorus to add a marked crescendo on the word "don't" in m. 19. The initial *Kyrie* plea returns, only to be interrupted by new material for the unified tenors and basses at m. 37, drawing

textual inspiration from Thomas's own background in African American spiritual arrangements, many of which incorporate trumpet imagery, and the text of 1 Corinthians 15:52 that inspired movements in Handel's *Messiah* and Brahms's *Ein Deutsches Requiem.* The *Christe eleison* begins as a contemporary gospel solo for the tenor with original text by the composer, allowing the soloist to function as a worship leader or intercessor. The chorus takes up the plea to Christ at m. 51, leading into a repetitive one measure phrase for the chorus through a variety of richly harmonized chordal structures and the tenor's improvisatory exhortations lead to an exciting and dramatic finale as both soloist and chorus beg for the Lord's mercy.

The *Gloria* begins in a stately, joyous tempo. Thomas gives special attention to the *staccati* idea on "highest" in the opening section, which introduces a repeated melodic motive. This motive occurs throughout the piece and incorporates the following pitches ♭7-5-4-♭3 in sequence utilizing the entire choir singing in unison octaves (Figure 3 on page 59). The *Laudamus te* text introduces new material with a swung, cool jazz feel before a return to the initial material. The soprano soloist is featured in the next section over a choral "ooh." At m. 51, Thomas incorporated a step-touch for the choir that continued to the downbeat of m. 59 when clapping on beats 2 and 4 was added. Thomas also encouraged the soprano to improvise freely over the repeated measures also beginning at m. 51. Thomas draws the text freely from different translations of the *Gloria.* He chooses to use the pronouns "Thee" and "Thou" throughout. A variant of the Trinitarian formula ("In the name of the Father, etc.") is interpolated before the liturgical text's final *Gloria patri* statement.

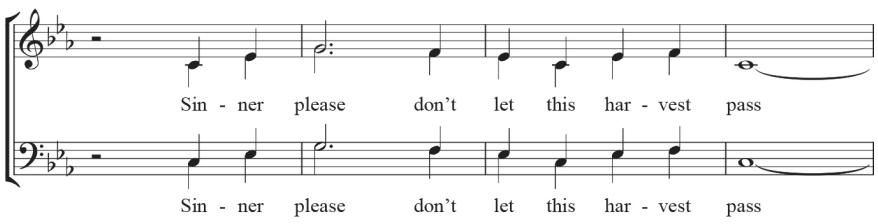
The *Credo* text presents a challenge to composers who must find a way to handle the lengthy, yet signif-

Kenneth W. Louis, arr., *Sinner, Please Don't Let This Harvest Pass*



from *Lead Me, Guide Me, 2nd ed.* (GIA Publications, 2012). Used by permission.

André J. Thomas, *When the Trumpet Sounds,* mm. 24–27



André J. Thomas, *Mass: A Celebration of Love and Joy,* "Kyrie," mm. 16–19

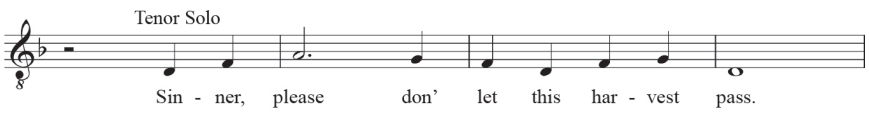


Figure 2. The Spiritual *Sinner Please Don't Let This Harvest Pass* in its hymn form as quoted by Thomas

icant, text. Thomas addresses the challenge by choosing to set the Apostles' Creed rather than the more substantial Nicene Creed or *Symbolum Nicenum.* This movement is the longest and contains some of the more challenging singing in the piece. The tenor soloist introduced the initial *Credo* statement in English, not unlike an incipit, with the choir joining on "and in Jesus Christ." The tenor soloist (not the tenor section *Soli* as indicated in the score) and the choir repeat this material and continue into the next section celebrating the Virgin birth. Thomas has cited Francis Poulenc's influence on this section utilizing quartal harmonies, concluding with the unison choir's emphatic downward descent to "hell" again, incorporating the ♭7-5-4-♭3 motive. The tenor soloist works his way up through a series of exclamations and pitch levels celebrating the third day's resurrection. At m. 71, the tempo dramatically accelerates with the tenor soloist and chorus in a call-and-response exchange. This call-and-response transfers to the lower voices and the upper voices. All voices begin a joyful repetition of "I believe" with the tenor section making interjections at m. 119. Thomas directed the choir to pull back to a *sotto voce* at m. 129. He also added a *caesura* at the end of m. 154 for a lengthy improvisation by the soloist before the final chord.

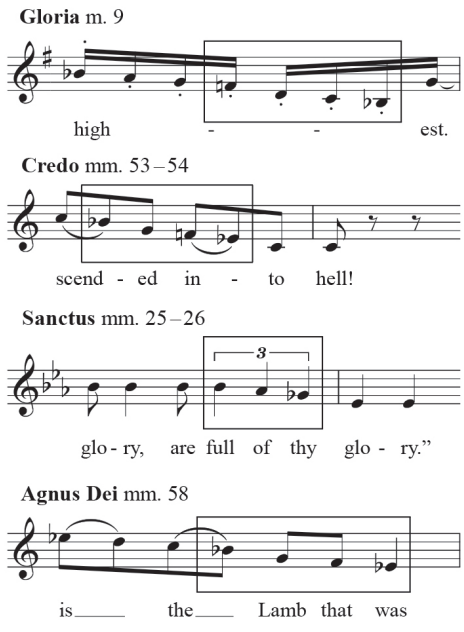


Figure 3. André J. Thomas, *Mass: A Celebration of Love and Joy.* SATB unison melodic motive: ♭7 - 5 - 4 - ♭3

As in the other movements, Thomas does not rely on one strict translation of the liturgical *Credo,* though he closely adheres to the text. His additions to the Apostles' Creed include the belief in one baptism and "that when my life is over, I'm going home to live with my God!" The longing for home and the idea of a "heavenly home" is an idea present in many spirituals[9]—"my home is over Jordan" in *Deep River* and "going home to live with God" in *Soon I Will Be Done,* for example. Interestingly, it is also a direct textual quote of the final line of Robert Ray's setting of the *Credo* in his *Gospel Mass.*[10] For choirs that may be uncomfortable with the *Credo*'s reference to the "and the holy catholic church," Thomas suggests replacing it with, "and the church universal on earth" in situations where there is an objection to the term "catholic." Ray also utilized this text swap in his Mass setting on occasion.

Incorporating material from Isaiah 6:1-4, the *Sanctus* begins with what Thomas calls a "mystical" choral setting describing the seraphim. Inspired by a graduate student's research, the opening measures are an homage to legendary Detroit-based gospel choral director and arranger, Thomas Whitfield. The dynamic at the beginning of this movement was changed from *forte* to *mezzo-piano* by the composer in performance. The tenor soloist continues with the seraphic text before the whole chorus enters on a triumphant "Holy!" The liturgical *Sanctus* text is set rhythmically and ends with a unison descending passage, like those found in the *Gloria* and *Credo.*

The soprano soloist returns with a complete statement of the text from Isaiah beginning, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I also saw the Lord…" which leads into a return to the "Holy" material. The *Hosanna* is also adjusted down one dynamic level (*mp* from *mf,*) and Thomas was insistent that the choir would not breathe after each repetition of "highest." The upper choral voices and lower choral voices share the *Benedictus* text, which Thomas has set using repeated quarter note triplet patterns, reminiscent of passages in

his setting of Langston Hughes's *I Dream a World.* The soprano soloist continues with a more personal plea based on the scriptural text already incorporated. The personal nature of these pleas, "I want two wings…", etc., has its roots in traditional gospel music, as well as referencing African American spirituals such as *I Got Shoes* ("I've got wings…") A final repetition of the *Sanctus* section serves to end the movement, but instead of a cry of angels, it is the cry of those on the earth.

Thomas asks for a dramatic crescendo on the initial "Lamb" of the exciting finale to the *Mass.* Conductors should note an error in the alto line at m. 7 and m. 18. The latter half of beat 3 should be an E♮ instead of an F. The tenor solo line that follows two statements of the *Agnus Dei* is in a contemporary gospel style. The text is by the composer and references the African American experience of slavery through the use of the word "captives," a coded word that could refer to either the Israelites enslaved in Babylon or Egypt or to the enslaved Africans themselves.[11]

The final *Agnus Dei* statement is repeated twice, ending with "grant us thy peace." This is a departure in format from liturgical practice, as is the driving gospel breakdown that follows. In what is surely a nod to Handel's immortal *Messiah,* Thomas incorporates the "Worthy is the Lamb" text from Revelation 5:12-13 and also evokes classic choral gospel works, such as Byron J. Smith's "Worthy To Be Praised" rather than concluding with the *Dona nobis pacem* text. Thomas incorporates movement beginning at m. 47 with a standard step-touch and adding claps on 2 and 4 at m. 84. He also adds an extension to the piece by incorporating a *Dal Segno al fine* at m. 98 that returns to m. 82. The repeated text of "honor and glory and wisdom and power and strength" propels the piece to a stirring ending with repeated "Amens."

Performing Mass

High school choirs, college choirs, and community and professional ensembles will find the work accessible in its entirety and as excerpted movements. Of special note are the vocal ranges, which are limited and lie in a reasonable tessitura for amateur singers. Care is taken that the tenor part does not lie consistently at the top of the range and the alto part does not lie at the bottom of the range. Each section is given *tutti* solo moments that are melodic and exciting. There is also a great deal of tenor/bass unison sectional singing and soprano/alto unison sectional singing. The work is primarily homorhythmic for the choir with the use of the soloists and orchestra to add texture.

The energy of the piece and some of the more gospel-inspired segments pair naturally with movement. Movement should feel organic, and the ability of the singers in the ensemble to execute it appropriately should be taken into consideration. Simple step-touches and claps are recommended.

The length of the piece makes it ideal to program with another shorter multi-movement work or octavo program. For the ACDA National Conference performance, the *Mass* was paired with *Alzheimer's Stories* by Robert Cohen. Thomas suggests the *Requiem Mass* of Afro-Brazilian composer José Maurício Nunes Garcia, which, interestingly, was the work originally paired with the Ray *Gospel Mass* in 1978. Other possible pairings from Black composers include Rosephanye Powell's *Cry of Jeremiah,* Adolphus Hailstork's *I Will Lift Mine Eyes,* or Psalm settings by George Walker. Several of Thomas's popular spiritual arrangements and non-idiomatic compositions have also been orchestrated and would complement the larger work.

The composer's notes indicate the work may be performed with piano only; piano, bass, and drum set; chamber orchestra, or full orchestra. The piano part will work best with a strong technical player capable of playing the part as notated. Due to the supportive nature of the written piano part, improvisations cannot veer from the established harmonies. Thomas's longtime friend and musical collaborator, Judy Arthur, was the pianist for the 2018 world premiere performances. She found the piano part published in the choral octavo to be more challenging than the orchestral part and to be among Thomas's most challenging piano accompaniments.[12] She says, "Pianists need to have facility playing gospel and jazz styles. *Credo* and *Sanctus* have strong jazz influences, while *Gloria* is a heavy, driving gospel style. If a pianist doesn't have a bass and drum set playing with them, they will have to add a great deal of rhythmic drive to their playing, and heavy on

the bass line. Playing with confidence and style is very important."

The selection of soloists for the performance of this piece is a crucial element. Two or three solo voices may be utilized. Thomas suggests a lighter soprano voice for the *Gloria* and a more powerful mezzo-soprano or alto voice for the *Sanctus,* though some singers can produce both the necessary delicacy and heft for both solos. The tenor soloist is required to sing several G4s in dramatic, full voice and demonstrate gospel flexibility. The singers must be capable of legitimate classical singing in the upper register, as well as more idiomatic gospel-style chest voice singing and improvisational melismas.

Soprano NaGuanda Nobles has been collaborating with Thomas for almost thirty years and was a soloist at the world premiere performances of the *Mass.* Nobles says, "Dr. Thomas demands excellence and preparation. He welcomes artistry and creativity, as long as it is stylistically appropriate and accurate."[13] When approaching the role as soloist, the singer must execute the music with beauty, while incorporating improvisations as a tasteful garnish. Nobles credits her church background and her years of experience singing with Thomas for her familiarity with the style of this piece. Singers with less familiarity are encouraged to spend some time listening to a variety of music by Thomas and others to familiarize themselves with the style.

A New American Mass

A new Mass setting by a significant and popular composer is always of interest to choral directors. A setting by a Black composer of international renown is even more exciting. André Thomas's enduring legacy will be in his music's accessibility and the enjoyment and satisfaction both singers and conductors find in performing his works. For those who have selected repertoire from his catalog frequently, the hallmarks of Thomas's style are ubiquitous in this work—the playful rhythms, the carefully written piano accompaniments, and the inviting, singable melodies partnered with gospel forms and jazz harmonies. These elements are paired with incredibly diverse references from Poulenc to Whitfield and the rich musical and textual legacy of the Black spiritual; the resulting work is an American original. CJ

NOTES

[1] Marques L.A. Garrett, "Beyond Elijah Rock: The Non-Idiomatic Choral Music of Black Composers," accessed September 21, 2020, https://www.mlagmusic.com/research/beyond-elijah-rock.

[2] Details about Thomas's life and the writing of the Mass come from an interview with the author conducted in July 2020. Details about the Negro spiritual can be found in André J. Thomas, *Way Over in Beulah Lan': Understanding and Performing the Negro Spiritual* (Dayton, OH: Heritage Music Press, 2007).

[3] André J. Thomas, *Mass: A Celebration of Love and Joy* (Dayton, OH: Heritage Music Press, 2017).

[4] The score markings referred to throughout the interview come from the author's marked score from the rehearsal process with the composer.

[5] André J. Thomas (composer) in discussion with the author, July 2020.

[6] André J. Thomas, *When the Trumpet Sounds* (Nashville: Shawnee Music, 1992).

[7] Kenneth Louis, "Sinner, Please Don't Let This Harvest Pass" in *Lead Me, Guide Me,* ed. Robert Batastini (Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc. 2012), 774.

[8] Charles Blockson, "Songs of the Underground Railroad," in *The Hippocrene Guide to the Underground Railroad* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1994), 339.

[9] Charshee C. Lawrence-McIntyre, "The Double Meanings of the Spirituals," *Journal of Black Studies* 17, no. 4 (1987): 390-397. www.jstor.org/stable/2784158.

[10] Robert Ray, *Gospel Mass* (New York: Hal Leonard, 1978).

[11] Lawrence-McIntyre, *Double Meanings of Spirituals,* 390-397.

[12] Judy R. Arthur (pianist) in discussion with the author, September 2020.

[13] Naguanda Nobles (soprano) in discussion with the author, September 2020.

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CHORAL CONVERSATIONS

An Interview with James Benjamin Kinchen, Jr.

by Stanley Bochat and Timothy Keith Griffin, Jr.

James Benjamin Kinchen, Jr., is a veteran choral conductor and educator. Kinchen is a native of Jacksonville, Florida, and is presently professor of music and director of choral activities at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside in Kenosha, Wisconsin. He also directs the Milwaukee Choristers, an eighty-seven-year old, self-sustaining community choir. Besides directing choirs, he teaches conducting, choral methods and materials courses, does clinical supervision for choral teachers-to-be, and, occasionally, teaches courses in African American music. Before going to Wisconsin, he taught music and directed choirs in Florida, Illinois, Virginia, and North Carolina. He has served ACDA as a Repertoire & Resources chair at state, regional, and national levels and as a Wisconsin Choral Directors Association President and North Central ACDA President.

How did you first become involved with choral music?

My first involvement with choral music was at the beginning of seventh grade. My father took me to register at Darnell-Cookman Junior High School in Jacksonville. Registration was in the auditorium in those pre-computer days. We had registered for all of my classes, and then I saw the choral director sitting over at the music table. She was also on the music staff at our church. He said, "Let's go over and speak with Mrs. [Ruby] Askew." We got to the table, and she looked at me and asked, "Boy, are you going to sing with me?" I don't know to this day what I was going to say, but when I opened my mouth, my father spoke and said, "Yes, he'll sing," and that was the beginning of my involvement with choral music.

I enjoyed choral music in junior high school, but I had no idea that it would later become a career path. The discovery came later when I was in tenth grade when I had a fabulous all-state and solo festival experience. That is when I began to understand that music was what I was called to do. I did undergraduate studies at Jacksonville University. Then, I was hired at the age of twenty to teach high school choral music in my hometown for three years. I had a three-year plan: three years of teaching, then on to grad school. I did graduate study at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale and completed my doctorate at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro.

How have your mentors helped shape and mold who you are and what you do now?

That is such an important question, and I could go on and on reflecting on my many mentors. Everything starts with my parents, J.B. and Bertha Lee Kinchen. We did not have much in the way of money or stuff. Still, they mixed in copious amounts of love, belief in me as a person, discipline, character building, encouragement, and faith in God. The combination of all those things put the structure in place for

everything that I have ever attained. Ruby Askew, my junior high music teacher who ran a tight ship, but most importantly, understood young people enough to make learning fun. Alpha Hayes Moore, my director at Stanton Senior High School (also home of "Lift Evr'y Voice and Sing"), quite the taskmaster, was also a very important mentor.

Beyond that, there were people in my community who were choral directors, maybe ten or fifteen years ahead of me, who were also mentors. Another name that comes to mind is Virdell Jakes, who was so passionate and functional in what he did as a teacher. I always thought that he could go into a grocery store at four or five o'clock in the afternoon and round everybody up and have a choir going in a few minutes.

I am so grateful to the late Vernon Smith, a high school director at the time, who gave me lots of opportunities to do things with his singers as a college student; this was an even bigger deal than I realized as it related to my development. Edward Bryan, my college director who reputedly worked for one dollar a year because his family owned this large life insurance company and didn't need it, deserves mention. He was well versed in quality literature, which translated to his ensembles' repertoire. We have to keep in mind that at that time, there were only a handful of African American students at JU. However, he noticed my talents and gave me opportunities for leadership and musical experiences while segregation was still alive in many places. I assisted Robert Kingsbury, my graduate choir director who allowed me to conduct a major performance of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* in his stead when he became ill.

Then there's the great William Dawson, who honored me by calling me his friend. I planned the last performance of his music that he ever heard sung. It was at the Southern Region ACDA in Birmingham in 1990. I recall sitting next to him as he listened to this incredible HBCU Honor choir conducted by Brazeal Dennard, mainly singing his "spiritual" settings. My friend, Robert Harris, whose Northwestern University performances, especially of the masterworks with orchestra, were breathtaking. The list goes on and on, and I owe so much to all of those who spent time with me, who gave me advice, and modeled for me their excellence.

What conductors influenced you as a young conductor?

Robert Shaw's work became for me, as for many other choral conductors, the standard (and "unreachable star") for serious choral singing. I had the chance to go to Indiana University to sing and study under Robert Shaw and Julius Herford. What an experience. Shaw's ear was absolutely uncanny. His mastery of the score in all its detail and ability to focus in rehearsal on those details without ever losing sight of the whole as a work of art was something I marveled. But it did inspire me to try and be the *best* choral artist I could be.

William Dawson was an influence long before I ever met him. While working a summer job, I met a man named Mr. Jones, whose wife was a member of Dawson's Tuskegee Choir. Upon gauging my trustworthiness, he offered to loan me his wife's original recording of Dawson's Tuskegee Institute Choir for one night. When he loaned me the recording, I recall him saying to me in dead seriousness, "If anything happens to this recording, I will have to leave home." To hear the choir sing these songs of my heritage with the right mix of earthiness, expressive sincerity, and nuance totally entranced me. As a young conductor, I admired Donald Neuen and Dale Warland. And there is so much integrity and musicianship in the work of John Rutter, whom I first interacted with in the mid-1980s at a North Carolina ACDA workshop. I have to give props to my conducting teachers: William McNeiland, my first conducting teacher, Robert Bergt, John Locke, Richard Cox, and Peter Perret, a really fine symphony conductor with whom I studied privately.

What principles and core values guide you in your conducting and your teaching?

Choral music is a vocal art. My work honors the centricity of the human voice and the appreciation of the beautiful range of colors and timbres that the voice can bring. I am excited by the capabilities of the voice. Choral music is also an ensemble art; we are not a group of undisciplined singers singing together. Choral singing is the ultimate experience of a team effort. The composer must speak. I believe very

firmly in trying to understand what the composer wanted by studying and knowing the score. I think these are my best moments as a choral artist, as a conductor, as a teacher. I have discovered enough of what the composer wants and how I might achieve it to aid the singers and orchestra in that direction so that the composer speaks to the audience. Choral music is, above all, a human expression. As a conductor, I want a balance of head and heart in the art so that there is this intellectual piece of music-making right alongside this emotional/spiritual component. Most often, the best of what we do is the result of hard work. The sweat has to be there to enable the inspiration to happen.

From where did your interest in the negro spiritual come?

It is a connection that goes back to junior high, where we performed many of the classical arrangements of the "spiritual." (Negro *folksong* was the term that Dawson always used.) Growing up, I heard them sung as folk pieces in our church, too. But in junior and senior high school, while we performed the sacred and secular music of Western composers, we also did the "spirituals." It seemed so natural for us. As we did them more and more, I came to appreciate them more—mainly when I understood where they came from. They were utterances of my ancestors, profound expressions of faith in religion (Christianity). Even though given to my forebears by their subjugators, they were able to turn it upside down to make it become something relevant to them and their situation. So, they knew whose side God was on when they sang, "Go down, Moses." They understood that they were the people who needed to be let go and be made free.

Even in our nearly *all-white* choir in college, the director understood

that this was a part of the American heritage and that these white kids, many of whom had not experienced any of this music, needed to be able to experience it for its artistic and human value. And so, I was proud that we got a chance to sing some of *my* music in that setting. And not as "gimmick" or something exotic, but in a very respectful way. The songs of our slave forebearers say so much. They express so many things, and they do it with such incredible humanity. They were primarily songs of faith but could function in many ways, including communicating hidden meanings when needed.

"Steal Away" could be a call to prayer, or it could signal an escape attempt. Harry T. Burleigh, Robert Nathaniel Dett, Hall Johnson, William Dawson, John Wesley Work, Undine Smith Moore, to name some of the older generations, and people of more modern vintage all the way up to folk like Moses Hogan. He was a giant of the genre, and to think of people like Stacy Gibbs, who is being very fruitful and enjoying tremendous success today. They have built on the foundations and stand on the shoulders of older masters to keep expressing the "spiritual" so that there is creative freshness, while respecting the music and preserving its spiritual and artistic integrity. I have gladly given a good deal of effort and energy over a career as a conductor, clinician, and presenter to help people understand and better appreciate this tremendous music—to help choral singers and artists who are not Black see themselves as choirs and conductors who could perform this music even though it had African roots, maybe the same as I do with Palestrina and Bach.

Emerging research in the impact on motivation and engagement in our profession suggests the importance of using a culturally responsive repertoire and pedagogy in the choral classroom. But what does that mean?

This is a great and challenging question. For me, primarily "classically" trained, it is helpful to have roots in the African American church and popular music. As a kid, I was part of a little "pop-soul" group that we called " Versatile Keys. I think everything had the same chord progressions. We changed the words and rhythm from song to song in our attempt to be responsive to some important "non-classical" cultural elements at that time. When I first started teaching high school, I taught my choirs gospel music even though you couldn't find any of the sheet music commercially available. I learned the songs and taught them aurally. I taught my choirs some of the popular "top 40" R&B pieces like "Stairway to Heaven," "Let's put it All Together," and songs like that.

I'm fortunate to have some of that cultural flexibility programmed in me. One of the great things today about popular songs, world music, and music of non-western cultures is that the availability of sheet music and well-recorded models make those kinds of music a lot more approachable to "foreigners," so to speak. There are so many workshops and opportunities to learn different performance practices that respond to the norms of different cultures. It is an exciting time to be a choral director. Exciting in the sense that there is music available to us that explores outside of the western "traditional" choral canon.

Can you talk about your path to the position as director of choral activities at UW Parkside?

It sort of starts in seventh grade even though I didn't know where that would lead me. It continued through the wonderful schools of Jacksonville, although they were racially segregated, but I had wonderful experiences there with strong, caring teachers. I was hired to teach high school at the age of twenty at the toughest, roughest of the thirteen high schools in the district. After three years, I went to grad school. My first college job was at Southeastern Illinois College in Harrisburg, which was really a community school that had never had a full-time music teacher, though I was never really full time. I was three-quarter time and, boy, was I glad to get that job.

From there to Hampton in Virginia, where I served a year in the place of a colleague who was on study leave. That was a tremendous experience because Hampton is one of the oldest and most fabled of the HBCUs. Lots of tradition there and opportunity to be immersed in it there. Then to Winston-Salem State, which was another wonderful experience. And from there, at a point where I needed new opportunities for growth, I came to UW Parkside in 1989.

What are some other high points of your career?

When I think about the little barefoot, big-headed boy who grew up on the dirt road called Doeboy Street in the house with the old out-of-tune piano where a third of the keys did not work, I have been tremendously blessed beyond words to be in positions where I feel I had the chance to make a difference. There is a list in terms of repertoire, but I don't want to go through the entire list. The Nguzo Saba Suite, a seven-movement Kwanzaa work that we commissioned Glenn Edward Burleigh to compose in 1994, was a big deal. Over the years, we've performed this work a few times, often collaborating with other choirs, with Glenn coming to accompany us before his untimely death twelve years ago. As our guests, Keith, with your Zest Choir, was an excellent opportunity to create this choral collaboration between my student singers, my adult singers, and your wonderfully trained youthful singers. I am so glad we had the opportunity to collaborate.

Stan, you mentioned *Messiah,* which we do complete in series every three years with orchestra (but will not be able to this year due to the pandemic). But, since what we do in our art is anchored in our literature, some other works that I have enjoyed leading performances of include: Brahms's *Ein Deutsches Requiem,* Verdi's *Requiem,* Mendelssohn's *Elijah,* Bach's *Magnificat in D, Gloria* settings of Vivaldi and Poulenc, Mozart's *Confessor's Vespers,* Haydn's *Nelson Mass,* Thompson's *Frostiana* and the *Peaceable Kingdom,* and Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms.* Bucket list? Bach's *B Minor,* Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis,* Robert Nathaniel Dett's *Chariot Jubilee* and *Ordering of Moses,* Undine Smith Moore's *Scenes from the Life of a Martyr: To the Memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

I could talk about the pieces and trips as highlights, but in the end, it is truly my students that I have work with, and the lives I have intersected with that have made my career worthwhile. They are the ultimate highlight.

What do you envision the greatest post-COVID-19 challenge for choral conductors, and how would you address it? (This question was supplied by the previous Choral Conversations Column interviewee.)

One challenge is that this particular virus will likely be with us from now on. We will have safe vaccines available to the public in a few months. We will also continue to treat people who have it more effectively and continue learning more about this virus's science. Even so, we in the choral community will keep having to be mindful of what is necessary for us to sing safely together and for our audiences to hear us sing safely. A positive challenge is how we can use this pandemic period to have fresh, creative thoughts about our art—how we teach it, how we practice it, and how we share it. As we have all seen, this coronavirus can restrict us. But we are so creative! I think we will keep finding exciting, novel ways to do this inexorable, irrepressible thing that we have continued to do through plague, war, famine, and the worst of times.

Please provide a question to the next Choral Conversation interviewee.

How has 2020 shaped your perspective on life? CJ

Stanley Bochat is in his seventh year on the faculty of Nash Elementary School, Kenosha, WI, where he teaches music and directs the choir.

Timothy Keith Griffin, Jr. is excited to have recently been appointed choral specialist at Washington Fine Arts Middle School in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

Don't miss a Choral Conversation with Rosephanye Powell!

See the March 2020 issue, pages 69-74. Perhaps best recognized as one of the United States' leading contemporary choral composers, in this Choral Conversation, she discusses her music, the compositional process, and reflects on being a prominent African American female composer.

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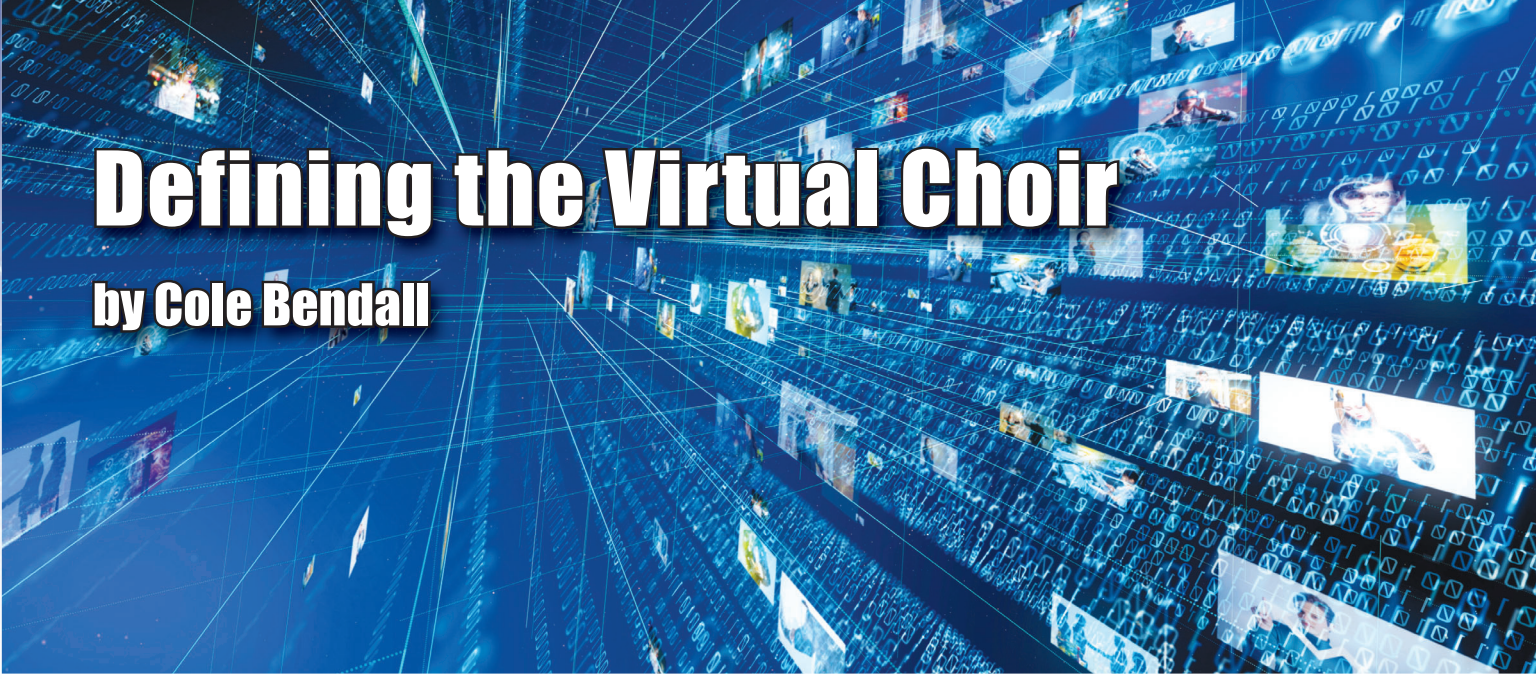

Defining the Virtual Choir

by Cole Bendall

While the world is changing how it consumes, experiences, and performs music in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the role of so-called "virtual choirs" has grown exponentially. For a mode of music making that did not exist in a widely known manner until the early 2010s, its proliferation across choral music and choral education circles is profound. Our industries have yet to define the parameters in which a virtual choir works, alongside its meaning and its purpose. By understanding this, participants can enter the process of virtual choir creation with confidence as to what is expected of the process, directors can review the best practice in which to coach and develop virtual choirs, and administrators or committees can learn how to best promote and extol the merits of this platform to prospective audiences or sponsors.

A common retort to virtual choirs is illustrated by this statement recalled to the author: "It [virtual choir] is not 'choir' to me or my singers."[1] While emotive and reflective of personal viewpoint, this is a loaded statement. If a virtual choir isn't "choir," what is choir? What are its component features and principles? What is the purpose of a choir or a virtual choir? Christopher Small writes, "It is only by understanding what people do as they take part in a musical act that we can hope to understand its nature and the function it fulfils in human life."[2]

Choral music functions as an act of music making, and in order to understand its purposes and how virtual choirs may succeed in, or fail to fulfil, those purposes, we must understand each potential element of its process. In short, to know what a virtual choir *isn't,* we must know what a choir *is.*

Defining the "Synchronous Choir"

In order to distinguish the two modes of music making for now, traditional in-person "choir" will be labelled here as a *synchronous*[3] *choir,* or group singing. What follows is a non-exhaustive list of common features of a synchronous choir. This is not a comprehensive history of synchronous choirs, nor an aesthetic depiction of choral singing or the general merits of music making.[4] Rather, this serves as an introduction to some of the areas of commonality and to anticipate where we might see issues or areas that require further understanding.

Synchronous choirs are unified in purpose by principles of education and social development. Such has been the case since the rise of the middle-class in the nineteenth century, where choral music was seen as a way of "weaning 'the horny handed sons of toil' away from 'vicious indulgences' towards the more rational, moral, and peaceable forms of recreation and leisure."[5] Indeed, William Weber notes that the growth of the large choral society, in particular, brings together mixtures of social classes who identify as a community of music makers, supporting the "lusting for identification with the mass of population."[6] For whatever reasons a participant may be involved in a synchronous choir, they would typically perform in a venue to an audience, or record together, although some synchronous choirs exist for the sole purpose of casual rehearsal or sing-along. Participants in a synchronous choir may self-define as a member of that choir or a

subset of that choir—be it a section (a voice part, for example), a particular age group, part of a particular geographical area, or other factors. Indeed, certain synchronous choirs may fully define themselves as running for the purpose of advocating a community subset, such as in dementia choirs, youth choirs, or choirs framed by sexual and gender identity—for example, the Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses.

Synchronous choirs may sing accompanied or unaccompanied music and may use a leader, conductor, or vocal coach (or may be fully autonomous). Synchronous choirs may be defined by their choice of repertoire, the space or institution in which they rehearse (and may be affiliated with), or other extra-musical factors. People may participate in synchronous choirs by paying a fee or attending for free or may be paid for their participation. Participation in synchronous choirs may be open, or may be subject to audition, ability, or the whims of whomever manages the power dynamics of this group.

In response to international social-distancing regulations, several synchronous choirs have attempted to simulate the proximity experienced in their ensembles through group meetings on video conferencing platforms such as Zoom or Skype. These platforms, while useful in maintaining social contact, were not designed for musical use and have been widely criticised for significantly increased lag and latency in response between participants, which impacts teaching methods often used in synchronous choral practice.

New works written for vocal ensembles to be recorded and performed on Zoom exploit and embrace the indeterminacy of connection and occasionally distorted sounds produced on these platforms.[7] In this way, such tools do provide a scope for new modes of sonic and musical potential. Nevertheless, in this regard, while the practice of music making through video conferencing platforms may technically take place at the same time, it is problematic to consider this as part of the conceptual understanding of synchronous choral practice at present.

Participation in synchronous choirs, therefore, typically also involves participants working in the same physical space: a building, a church, outdoors, a stadium, and so forth. The distance between singers is often close but may be modified to alter acoustic effect, balance between individual singers, or for non-musical reasons (physical limitations of a performance space such as the cantoris and decani sides of a cathedral choir, for example).

Perhaps most importantly to a conceptual understanding of a synchronous choir, these groups are often defined simultaneously as a singular unit (i.e., "I've joined a choir.") and a collective body of participants (i.e., "I sing with/as part of this chorus.")[8] Synchronous choir singers often describe a sense of what the conductor Paul Hiller defines as the "singing condition"—a state that, he argues, is only possible in group singing rather than individual singing, which "leads us towards an expressive state that lies beyond our normal condition."[9] While I would argue that this phenomenological stance of simultaneous group and

individual expression is not unique to choral and vocal ensembles (the same could be said of almost all instrumental ensembles), there are many ways in which vocal music is elevated in this environment.

Singing is an individual practice, not constrained by the economic limitations of the purchase of an instrument. There are numerous entry points to choral and vocal activity, which make this an accessible activity for large numbers of prospective singers. Finally, singers often sing words that convey alternate modes of meaning or belonging in whichever language they are sung. In a range of settings from a church choir singing a seasonal motet to joining in with a rock band singing lyrics together, or impassioned songs of protest movements, synchronous choirs may possess, modify, or amplify a wide variety of meanings, purposes, and belongings. Many of these principles arguably still successfully transfer to the world of the "virtual choir."

Defining the "Virtual Choir"

The term "virtual" is a borrowing from the post-classical Latin *virtualis,* which relates to the power to produce an effect. In Middle French and fifteenth-century English, the term became a synonym for a something that was "in essence, potentiality, or effect, *although not in form or actuality.*"[10] Modern usage of "virtual" conveys something that could be labelled as such for practical purposes, and may be very near to what the something may be but is not what it assumes to be according to strict definition.[11] The affiliation of the word *virtual* with computers and technology is a comparatively recent phenomenon, with the idea of illusory characters and objects first conveyed in 1930s French avant-garde theatre.[12] This *réalité virtuelle* (virtual reality) did not reach use until the 1970s, with its science fiction connotations first applied in Damien Broderick's 1982 novel, *The Judas Mandala.*[13] In both definitions of "virtual"—as an approximation of the intended practice and as a simulated, computerized presentation of the practice—the term "virtual choir" seems an appropriate designation.

In virtual choirs, individuals typically record their own elements to be edited together following recording. Unlike the majority of broadcast choral performances on radio and television, which often take the form of a group performance at the same place and time as "live," the group does not work "together" in the same sense. Depending on the parameters placed on them by whomever is editing the track, each member of the group can perform at a completely different time and place. Participants may record completely independently or can follow guidance from whomever is editing the project, potentially following guidance of a rendered click track, backing track, or other guide, which may include breathing, diction, articulation, dynamic or other sonic elements. The most successful virtual choir projects at present seem to be those where parameters for difference are as determined as possible prior to individuals recording.

A virtual choir is different from running a live session on a video conferencing software where latency and lag make traditional synchronous rehearsal, reliant on immediacy of response, impossible. Participants in virtual choirs are typically encouraged to use video, but several will allow participation using audio alone, mixed with other singers in the process.

The term "virtual choir" appears to have been first used in 2009 in a recording of Eric Whitacre's *Sleep* directed and edited by Scott Haines in response to the submission of a young soprano submitting her unaccompanied vocal part online.[14] Whitacre's virtual choir projects (managed in collaboration with Decca Records and external partners) have since blossomed. Its last incarnation *Sing Gently,* a work written during the initial peak of COVID-19 lockdowns, claiming to attract 17,572 singers from 129 countries.[15] Whitacre's choirs have been by far the most popularized of the virtual choir movement, but a plethora of creators have rendered their own attempts, including professional ensembles, youth groups, and large amateur symphonic choruses.

Several of these videos embrace different senses of setting and space even within the simulated environment. Disparity in style and form is prevalent in this mode from static shots of the full group of singers to "Brady Bunch" style grids with gentle panning to fully rendered, computer-generated real and non-real performance environments.[16] The simplest presentations available at present are straightforward audio

mixes set to slideshows, more a PowerPoint presentation than a typical choral performance.

By nature of adaptation to multimedia, the relationship between performer and audience is impacted by the inclusion of a new author. This kind of discussion is not new; the discussion of performer as interpreter of a composer's independent work has existed since the Romantic period, where notions of self-determinacy reached the forefront of artistic discourse. Nicholas Cook notes that these ideas must be dispensed with when dealing with music multimedia.[17] Creation of a virtual choir requires a synthesis of approaches and equally valid artistic processes coming from the author of the musical work (the composer); the performer (singers, players, conductors); the audience, who may also interpret the performance in a completely independent manner to performers; and our new author: video, sound, audio engineers, or, indeed, the conductor fulfilling these duties by themselves.

The role of this new author also presents new modes of understanding for a musical work. The staging of a virtual choir in a simulated real/non-real environment can support a plurality of interpretations. This is quite helpful for our understanding of the virtual choir, as these plurality of forms have almost always existed in this mode of music making. For example, a performance of Mozart's *Ave verum corpus* is different when performed by a church choir in a rural English village, or a professional-level symphonic chorus, as was the case in the combined virtual choir video of the Orfeó Català, City of Birmingham Symphony Chorus and London Symphony Chorus, staged in a simulated version of the Royal Albert Hall, London (Figure 1).[18] At its most extreme, presentation in this manner enables modes and settings of performance completely impossible in real life. The unnamed metropolis setting depicted in Eric Whitacre's *Fly to Paradise* Virtual Choir performance, for example, features singers positioned in colorful windows and billboards watching a young (computer-generated) angel taking to flight (Figure 2).[19] This illustrative and vivid environment demonstrates the potential range of fantastical possibilities open to a virtual ensemble performance when working with new authors.

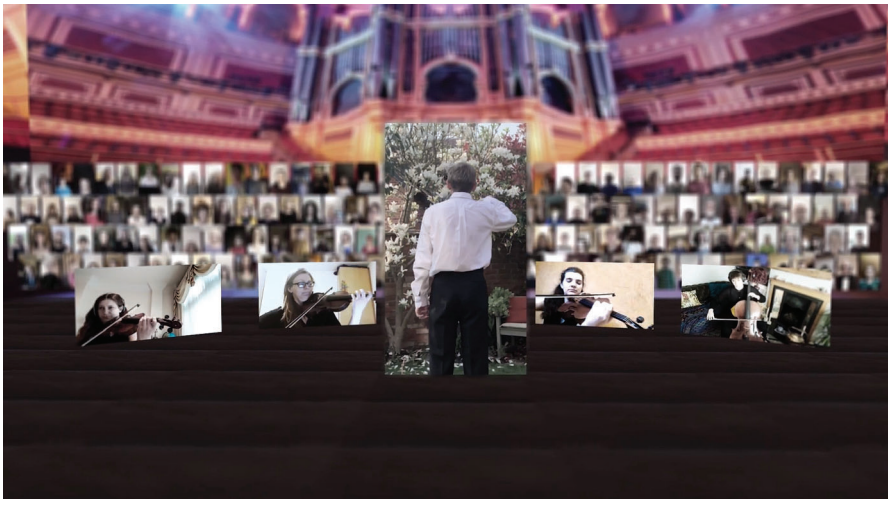

Figure 1

Figure 2

These values can be further manipulated by the presentation of individual singers who may or may not choose to present themselves in choir uniform, in a unified background or format. These values may be, to a degree, left more to the decisions of the video engineer or individual

performers than they would be in a synchronous choir.

Such presentation, combined with the ability to cut between shots and offer close-ups of individual singers, creates a new sense of mutual engagement between audience and performer that is not necessarily possible in synchronous choir contexts. Performer and audience are separated by the use of recorded media (rather than a live recording), but audiences are entitled to a closer proximity of experience owing to a wider range of shots, angles, and narrative of editing.[20] These issues of proximity are further encountered by the fact that performers can (theoretically, at least) pre-record their contribution from anywhere at any time. Performers can collaborate from further distances than ever before in choral performance: spatial proximity may or may not equal a more effective performance in this instance.

Conclusions

As indicated at the outset, a virtual choir does not fulfil the social, spatial, and aesthetic functions of what I have termed a synchronous choir. In many ways, however, the virtual choir presents new modes for musical performance and collaboration using the model of choral music making as its key frame of reference. Technological limitations provide the ability to simulate much of the recorded sound of choral singers and can, in fact, produce alternate presentations of these performances typically impossible in a real setting and space, although these sensory experiences cannot yet be passed on those recording virtual choir video and audio tracks. Further, we are left with the problem that, at present, there is no standardized format of a virtual choir, and so a

standardized definition is unnecessarily limiting. Understanding these elements has led to the following suggestion for a working definition of the term "virtual choir": *A multimodal creative product combining aspects of the methodology and form of choral music performance with the materialities of media creation.*

The meaning of and connection to virtual choir will likely require review as we continue to make music in the post-COVID-19 era, and as new recordings and performances using this format appear. Some might ask if that kind of definition could ever define the nuanced factors of what a choir is. At least virtually, I'd say it does. CJ

NOTES

[1] Interview with chorister. Cole Bendall, "Corona-tion Anthems: Virtual Choirs and Choral Music Making in a post-COVID era." Paper presented at Music in the Home: A Virtual Symposium, Northumbria University, UK, June 5, 2020.

[2] Christopher Small, Musicking: *The*

Meanings of Performing and Listening (Middletown, CT.: Wesleyan University Press, 1998). Kindle edition.

[3] The term "synchronous" has also developed altered meanings in the light of the COVID-19 outbreak in education and business sectors; the meanings I assign to this term are based on choral practice and philosophy.

[4] Paddy Scannell, "On Music and its Dissemination" in *Music, Culture, and Society: A Reader.* ed. Derek B. Scott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002): 193. An element of this—in my opinion, antiquated—viewpoint continues to exist in many British amateur choir constitutions when registering with national charity regulators.

[5] William Weber, "Mass Culture and the Reshaping of European Musical Taste, 1770-1870" in *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 8/1 (1977): 15.

[6] James G. Smith and Percy M. Young, Chorus (i). *Grove Music Online* (2001), accessed May 31, 2020. https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000005684.

[7] A selection of representative examples include Dale Trumbore's *I hope You're Doing Well,* Ellie Slorach's *Until the Dust Settles,* Sarah MacDonald's *In te domine speravi,* which are all available directly from their respective composers.

[8] There are well-documented distinctions between the definition of "choir" and "chorus." In this instance, the terms are used interchangeably.

[9] Paul Hillier, "The nature of chorus" in *The Cambridge Companion to Choral Music* ed. André de Quadros (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 64.

[10] "virtual, adj. and n.". *OED Online.* June 2020. Oxford University Press.

[11] In this instance, one may consider "virtual" a synonym for "in all but name" or "in effect."

[12] Artaud uses the expression "réalité virtuelle." See Antonin Artaud, *Le théâtre et son double* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938), 160.

[13] Peter Nicholls and David Langford, "Virtual Reality." *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction.* http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/virtual_reality (October 2011, rev. May 2020; accessed June 5, 2020).

[14] Eric Whitacre, "The Virtual Choir: How We Did It," blog post, March 23, 2010, accessed June 3, 2020. https://ericwhitacre.com/blog/the-virtual-choir-how-we-did-it. See Virtual Musicians Group, "' Sleep" (2009) – The Original Virtual Choir Experiment," *YouTube.* Uploaded February 29, 2012, accessed June 1, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8gg86GjMNqU

[15] See *Eric Whitacre's Virtual Choir 6: Sing Gently,* accessed 2 June 2020, https://virtualchoir6.com. This number only illustrates part of the engagement with Sing Gently. Data is not publicly available as to how viewers prepared tracks for the recording but never submitted or singers who may have submitted a recording for consideration but whose recordings were ultimately not used. See Eric Whitacre's Virtual Choir, *YouTube Channel,* date created unknown, accessed August 7, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/user/EricWhitacresVrtlChr

[16] Here, I define "real" as staging singers in a space that is known and indicates additional meaning (Carnegie Hall, the Metropolitan Opera, a local church, or another physical space) and "unreal" as unknown, simulated and conceptual spaces (this could even include the grids populated by participants in the "Brady Bunch"-esque virtual choirs). Of course, there are implications to this considering whether any setting here is real, but that is beyond the scope of this study.

[17] Nicholas Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 128.

[18] City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, "CBSO Chorus @ Home: Mozart's *Ave Verum Corpus,*" *YouTube.* Uploaded May 22, 2020, accessed August 8, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=psUYFIbZzfA

[19] Eric Whitacre's Virtual Choir, "Eric Whitacre's Virtual Choir 4: Fly to Paradise," *YouTube.* Uploaded July 11, 2013, accessed August 8, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y8oDnUga0JU

[20] John Ellis describes this process as "co-present intimacy." See John Ellis, "Broadcast TV as Sound and Image" in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings* ed. Gerald Mast, Marshall Cohen, and Leo Braudy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 347.

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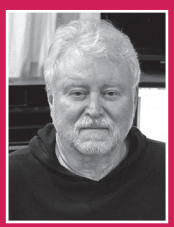

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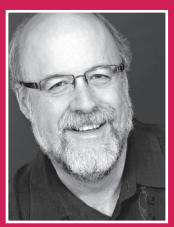

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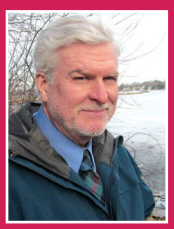

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- SATB; S solo; a cappella; performer's choice of English (John Milne)
- 4′ 56″. Forming his text on the well-known Maya Angelou line, "The caged bird sings of freedom," the composer successfully combines his lifetime of singing and arranging in the pop a cappella world with his turn to writing choral music. Close harmonies, pivot modulations, inspiring message; a winner for ensemble with solid intonation. ProjectEncore.org/john-milne

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CHORTEACH

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The Fall 2020 issue includes the following articles:

Singing Polyphony Today—Why Have All the Flowers Gone? by Jameson Marvin

Critical Thinking in Rehearsals by Gregory LeFils Jr.

Reconsidering the Use of Metaphor in Choral Rehearsals by Brian Winnie

Teaching Healthy Singing in the Choral and Applied Studio
Part One: The Pedagogues' Teachings
Part Two: The Students' Perspective
by Derrick L. Thompson

The ChorTeach index is organized by genre and annotated for easy reference. Following is a list of the categories:

1. Adolescent (Junior High/Middle School/High School)
2. Church Choir
3. Classroom & Curriculum
4. Community Choir
5. Conductor Self-Improvement
6. Elementary Choir
7. Female Singer
8. Interviews/Personal Reflection
9. Jazz
10. Male Singer
11. Multicultural
12. Performance
13. Recruiting
14. Rehearsals
15. Repertoire
16. Technology
17. Vocal

STUDENT TIMES

Jason Paulk, Editor <jason.paulk@enmu.edu>

Here's to Song: Remembering Our Time Together

by Cameron Colson

Column Editor's Note: Reflection abounds during uncertain times, and I'm sure many of our readers have spent countless hours remembering "the way things were" before our society become embroiled in a battle against COVID-19. As we try to resume some sense of normalcy and routine, planning "distanced" choral experiences, teaching via zoom, etc., many of us continue to struggle to articulate the depth and breadth of loss that we feel regarding the dearth of corporate singing, community, and interaction with friends, colleagues, students, and fellow musicians. The following article is a summary of reflections from undergraduate music majors at Eastern New Mexico University, compiled by senior music education major, Cameron Colson.

Every reader has their own story to tell regarding how their lives have been impacted and routines altered. It is our hope that this article increases empathy and community in our field, deepening our common bond. The unifying text in the article—*Here's to Song*—was written by Allister MacGillivray, arranged and set by Lydia Adams (Leslie Music Supply), which our ENMU Chamber Singers used as a closing piece on a fall recruitment tour.

Here's to Song

The candle flickers towards its last,
Our time together's ended;
The evening spent so swiftly passed,
No richer way to spend it.
Before we head our separate ways,
I'd like in truthfulness to say:
You've made this day a special day,
With songs and kindness splendid.

Here's to song, here's to time;
Here's to both with friends of mine;
Here's to friends who raise their voices high.
Kings have riches widely lain,
Lords have land, but then again,
We have friends and song no wealth can buy.

We each a different road must go,
To mountains, sea and city;
The hour has come to say adieus,
And all the more's the pity.
But first unite in hand and heart,
And sing a chorus ere we part;
For every end leads to a start,
We need not break so sadly.

And till our paths in future cross,
May blessings kindly greet you;
Until that time, I must, alas,
Only in memory meet you.
Often I will sit and stare,
And think upon this evening rare;
The company beyond compare,
For now, farewell and thank you.

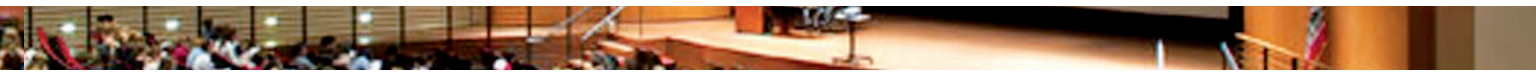
> "The candle flickers towards its last, our time together's ended. The evening spent so swiftly passed, no richer way to spend it."

Allister MacGillivray's words in *Here's to Song* affected musicians a little differently in 2020. For the choir students at Eastern New Mexico university, it felt as though the candle had been suddenly and unceremoniously blown out in the middle of planning, practicing, and preparing to share their choral music talent. Like many people all over the world, students were sent home to social distance and wait for news of how life would continue considering the outbreak of COVID-19. Life changed fundamentally, and for these musicians it became a time to realize just how much choir had impacted their everyday life in such positive ways. Gone were the days of ensemble, their musical family, and the unique experience of sharing the joy of singing together in the same room.

"Here's To Song" The Music and its Message

There is no doubt that the message of hope found in music that is sung is extremely powerful. It is natural for singers to find deeper meaning beyond just the simple words of a piece. For those participating in creating that message in an ensemble, the experience is unique. Not only do the lyrics provide obvious and deep connection, but musical choices of phrasing, articulation, and dynamics—all elements of ensemble—help to create deeper meaning for the members of the choir. This deeper meaning combined with clear diction, purpose, and breath create a complete message that has a massive effect on both audience members and singers.

> I've missed the gathering of all the different types of people coming together to make music. The passion we have for music is the greatest feeling. I miss hearing disso-



nances in some songs and then resolutions of beautiful phrases or chords. Those types of pieces are great examples of what singing together is: varied dissonances in music are just like all of the different personalities and individuals who make up the choir, competing, arguing, clashing; then the chords align and unify, just like all those people working together to create beautiful music.

—Dominique Barrera
(Sophomore Music Major)

For now, the message that song brings can still live within our hearts, although it has been crippled by the inability to meet as performers to make those more unique connections. For now, many turn to those memories made in the past or continue to keep music a daily part of their life.

Life is much easier with a song. When we don't have choir and the world is pained, we find that we lose hope. I feel like I have missed singing, but it gave me the chance to realize that true music, true song, lies in our hearts. And while I do miss the warmth of choir, I know we each are united through the shared song of our hearts.

—Ryan Boddy
(Sophomore Music Major)

Since quarantine, I have felt so anxious, sad, or scared for the world. I have found myself watching my past performances with my choir in order to find comfort.

—Cecilia McAfee
(Senior Music Major)

"Here's to Time"
Time Spent Engulfed by Music

With an overabundance of time freed from many daily aspects of regular life, those whose lives revolved around the constant study and rehearsal of making music in a group have found a chunk of their life missing. Time spent in quarantine seems odd, either painfully slow or extremely fleeting, and in both cases can feel meaningless if spent wastefully. For musicians, hours of rehearsal time a day is missing. Some are limited in their ability to practice at home away from provided practice rooms. However, like the fleeting nature of "quarantime," rehearsals were once so focused that hours felt like nothing at all.

Spending that time studying and practicing as an ensemble created moments unique only to the process of creating music as a group. Moments of unified breath, hearts aligning with one another, mouths unified in vowel shapes, harmonies locked in a powerful statement of togetherness, and even purposeful and connected silence. These moments, while technically brief in duration, made long-lasting memories. They are what make spending hours together focused on only a few pieces not only possible but extremely enjoyable and addicting.

I find myself desperately trying to find a replacement for the time I spent studying music in an ensemble, and while I practice and study individually, nothing has come close to the feeling of creating music with someone else. The closest I have gotten has been to increase the amount of

people I communicate with verbally or through text, but nothing has compared to the nonverbal connection found in creating music with someone else.

—Cameron Colson
(Senior Music Major)

During the quarantine, musicians have done their best to connect through virtual settings. For many, the effect is similar: the music is just as beautiful and the message of overcoming difficulties rings true to the audience. However, even these venues are extremely limiting and lack the same connection that musicians have come to love about collaboration. Singing alone to a recording track will never compare to the intensity of listening and response created in live music making. Like MacGillway writes, "We have friends and song no wealth can buy," and this is largely due to a choir's ability to gather together and rehearse and perform in person, creating its own energetic resonance.

The instant I started to communicate with my fellow music majors online, I realized just how much I missed making music with them.

—Kyle Martin
(Senior Music Major)

"Here's to Both with Friends of Mine" Our Music Family

All of what makes being in a choir powerful and beautiful includes the concept of true "ensemble." A great ensemble is more than simply a collective of like-minded singers with

intense focus; it includes a sense of community. For those musicians at Eastern New Mexico University, the loss of regular choir rehearsals was the loss of a regular in-person community. There is magic in a diverse community focused around creating a message of love, peace, and beauty, all the while hardly interacting verbally. It is the same sort of magic found in a well-oiled team of basketball players, the magic of nonverbal teamwork, where everyone is valued and supported.

> I have missed the familial uplifting. No matter what we have going on in our lives, or if we're having a bad day. No matter our different styles, voice types, majors, etc., we all come into choir to sing together. We are all there to support each other. And since being quarantined, I have missed that feeling of unity immensely.
>
> —Casey Hennigan
> (Junior Music Major)

"For Now Farewell and Thank You" Missing for Now, but Not Forever

It is clear that the lifestyle we had before the pandemic will likely not return to normal any time soon. Whatever changes will be made to how choirs will continue to operate, it is certain that music lives on within the voices of those that continue to practice, collaborate, and prepare for the day when we finally do get to meet again. It won't come as a surprise to those true musicians if tears of joy and gladness accompany the first rehearsals back after such a long and fearful hiatus. In the meantime, we can only do our best to add to the voices calling for safety, hope, and peace as we wait for that glad day.

The following are more voices added to the love expressed about choir:

> I miss working with talented musicians to achieve a common goal: sharing music and artistry with our community.
>
> —Taylor Bassing
> (Junior Music Major)

> I miss the energy. Nothing beats the energy that being in a choir brings. Being able to make beautiful music with your fellow musicians with intense focus on your own musicianship is an experience that creates an energy in the room that is unmatched.
>
> —Nathaniel Ray Minton
> (Sophomore Music Major)

> I guess the thing I miss most from choral singing is the community that we create inside and outside of the rehearsal space.
>
> —Devin DeVargas
> (Graduate Music Major)

> I miss the opportunity to rehabilitate each other after a rough day or during a tough week. It is so uplifting to walk into a room full of smiles and laughter with the anticipation of singing together. I miss it so much!
>
> —Emily Valencia
> (Senior Music Major)

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