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Sources of Mystery:
An Introduction to
Steven Sametz's
Three Mystical Choruses

Douglas R. Boyer

Steven Sametz has been hailed as “one of America’s most respected choral composers.”¹ His early works were brought to prominence through his collaboration with the acclaimed professional ensemble, Chanticleer. Sametz’s setting of *O llama de amor viva, A Mystical Vision of St. John of the Cross* was written for Chanticleer in 1987 and premiered at the Chorus America convention that year. It seems fitting that this musical relationship between composer and ensemble continues with the premiere of one of the most prestigious choral commissions in the country: the American Choral Directors Association’s Raymond W. Brock Memorial Commission. Chanticleer will premiere *Three Mystical Choruses* by Steven Sametz on March 9, 2011, in Chicago.

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Steven Sametz's *Three Mystical Choruses*

Sametz is the Ronald J. Ulrich Professor of Music and director of choral arts at Lehigh University, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and serves as artistic director and conductor of the Princeton Singers. His commitment to mentoring new composers in the craft of choral composition led him to establish the Choral Composers' Forum at Lehigh University nearly a decade ago, which is now cosponsored with ACDA. His substantial output spans nearly every genre; but regardless of the genre or the diversity of the forces involved, his works share an underlying desire to convey meaning, understanding, and emotional experience to listeners.²

Sametz thoughtfully and sensitively marries text to music. He seeks out a wide variety of texts to set, ranging from the most intimate poems of San Juan de la Cruz (*del nacimiento*, 1987) and Sor Juana (*La Eternidad*, 2004) to native American Tlingit texts used in his ballet-concerto for piano, orchestra and large choir, *The White Raven*.

His most ambitious work to date, *Carmina amoris* (2001; revised 2010) is a choral symphony in six movements for large orchestra, choir, and soprano, and tenor *sol*i, setting monastic love letters of Alcuin, Ausonius, and the anonymous clerical writings preserved in the *Carmina cantabrigiense*.

Reflecting the growing public debate over gay civil liberties, Sametz's most recent works speak to the struggle that has been inherent for the gay population for centuries. Although *Carmina amoris* is his most ambitious setting of gay love texts, other recent works take up this theme: *Dulcis amor*, commissioned by the Harvard Glee Club (2004), sets a love poem of the ninth-century cleric Alcuin of York; *We Two* (2006–07), commissioned by Cantus for a consortium of nine male choirs in the United States and Canada, sets lines from Walt Whitman's ground-breaking *Calamus* cluster from *Leaves of Grass*. Likewise, he has recently set Whitman's *We Two Boys Together Clinging* for

baritone and tenor duet with vibraphone and violoncello, recast for unaccompanied chorus in 2010.

Sametz's earliest choral/orchestral works exhibited his fascination with a wide variety of orchestral coloration. His use of Burmese gongs (*muji no makotoba – Scripture without words* on a text by Hakuin Ekaku), hammer dulcimer, onde martenot and cimbalon (*cent fois plus ombre*, on a text by Robert Desnos) leads to later experimentation with Indian tamera and tablas in his *Shamalyo* (in collaboration with the Indian singer/writer, Arati Shah-Yukich, 2007) and his recent use of electronics, either chorally or instrumentally with choir. His *Fantasia on Jesu, meine Freude* (2009), *Fantasia on Call to Remembrance* (2011) and *Voices of Broken Hearts* (2010) stretch the boundaries of singing into the realm of enhanced electronic vocal production. Use of electronic enhancement was foreshadowed in his violin concerto of 2006, *Be/dazzled*.

An article about the musical influences and style in the choral music of Steven Sametz was authored by this writer and published in the May 2002 *Choral Journal*. For readers desiring a more in-depth overview of the composer and his compositional style, you may find the archival article on the ACDA Web site. This article specifically explored the Raymond W. Brock Memorial Commission composed by Sametz.

Text

Sametz's *Three Mystical Choruses* is a three movement work.

Three Mystical Choruses

- I. Niño de Rosas (*Child of Roses*)
- II. En Kelohenu (*There Is None Like Our God*)
- III. Mẽ To Tere Paas Me (*I Am Within You*)

The guidelines for the Brock composition include a statement regarding the preferred use of a sacred text.³ Sametz selected three thought-provoking, highly varied texts taken from Christian, Jewish, and Hindu-Islamic-Sikh traditions. Each of the pieces is extractable for separate performance, it is their interrelationship, however, that asks us to

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The Lecturer in Choral Music and Academic Studies would join the current faculty of Alan Raines and Lynne Gackle in meeting the needs stemming from dramatic growth within the choral area.

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consider the nature of the sacred. With the juxtaposition of these texts, we are invited to consider if all denominations are pointing toward a common mystical source.

Three Mystical Choruses takes us on a spiritual journey. The first piece presents personal transformation; the second is a communal prayer that looks at our spiritual place in society; and the third opens to the realm beyond personal and societal to a metaphysical exploration of the divine. Within each of the pieces, there is an internal dimension of tension or struggle—a dark-

ness leading to light.

The first piece, *Niño de Rosas*, sets a text by Jesuit priest and poet Jacinto de Evia (b. circa 1629, Guayaquil, Ecuador). A story unfolds about a gypsy girl examining the hands of the infant Jesus and telling of his future. Although the work opens in the character of a gentle lullaby in 12/8, the gypsy girl's first concern is economic: "give me alms." As she reads his palm, telling of the shedding of his blood, the three kings honoring him as a king, his persecution by a king and, ultimately, of his death at the age

of thirty-three, she is more and more taken into the realm of the infant. Each stanza and refrain brings her progressively into his world. The evocative refrain, *Niño de Rosas* [*Child of Roses*], undergoes constant, subtle variations as the gypsy girl is awakened to the holiness of the child. At last, her request for alms accedes more to the sentiment expressed in the later line, "dale a la gitanita paga de glorias" ["give this little gypsy girl glory as payment"]. Sametz takes the text of Jacinto de Evia and creates a dramatic *scena* in which the gypsy girl undergoes a personal

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transformation as she reads the palm of the Divine Infant. How Sametz achieves this musical transformation will be addressed more fully later in this article.

The text of *Niño de Rosas* is below, the English translation is by Sametz.

*Dame una limosnita,
Niño bendito,*

*Si me das la mano,
Infante divino,
la buenaventura
verás que te digo.*

*Niño de rosas,
dale a la gitanita
paga de glorias.*

*Miro aquí la raya,
que muestra que aunque niño
vererás tu sangre,
baño a mis delitos.*

*Niño de rosas,
dale a la gitanita
paga de glorias.*

*Serás de tres reyes
Rey reconocido,
y a este mismo tiempo
de un rey perseguido.*

*Niño de rosas,
dale a la gitanita
paga de glorias.*

*Miro esotra raya,
ioh con qué prodigios!
A los treinta y tres,
dejarás la vida,
de amores rendido.*

*Niño de rosas,
dale a la gitanita
paga de glorias.*

*Dame una limosnita,
dale a la gitanita
paga de glorias.*

Niño de rosas!

Give me alms
Blessed child,

If you would give me your hand
Infant divine,
the fortune
You will see which I'll tell you.

Child of roses
give this little gypsy girl
glory as payment.

I read on your palm
the line that says, "although you
are a child
You will shed your blood,
which cleanses my sins."

Child of roses
give this little gypsy girl
glory as payment.

By three kings
you will be venerated as a king
and at the same time
by a king you shall be persecuted.

Child of roses
give this little gypsy girl
glory as payment.

I see in another line
O, what wonders!
At thirty-three years
you will give up your life
exhausted by love.

Child of roses
give this little gypsy girl
glory as payment.

Give me alms,
give this little gypsy girl
glory as payment.

Child of roses!

The familiar ninth-century Hebrew prayer *En Kelohenu* is the text for the second piece of the set. Orthodox Jews pronounce it *Ein Kelokeinu* when referring to it outside of prayer in order to maintain the sanctity when referencing the Almighty. Traditionally, Jews are expected to recite one hundred prayers of blessing each day to express appreciation for everything God provides to them. It has been said that *En Kelohenu* was written to further the ability to fulfill one's gratitude to God. God is referred to by four different names in this prayer — *Elohim* [God], *Adon* [Master], *Melekh* [King], and *Moshi'ah* [Deliverer].⁴

*En kelohenu, en kadonenu
En k'malkenu, en k'moshienu*

*Mi kelohenu, mi kadonenu
Mi k'malkenu, mi k'moshienu*

*Node kelohenu, node kadonenu
Node k'malkenu, node k'moshienu*

*Baruch kelohenu, baruch kadonenu
Baruch k'malkenu, baruch k'moshienu*

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*Ata hu elohenu, ata hu adonenu
Ata hu malkenu, ata hu moshienu*

There is none like our God, there is
none like our Lord

There is none like our King, there is
none like our Deliverer:

Who is like our God, who is like our
Lord

Who is like our King, who is like our
Deliverer:

Let us give thanks to our God, Let us
give thanks to our Lord

Let us give thanks to our King, Let us
give thanks to our Deliverer:

Blessed is our God, Blessed is our Lord
Blessed is our King, Blessed is our
Deliverer:

You are our God, you are our Lord,
You are our King, you are our Deliverer:

—Blessing from the morning
Shabbat service
(9th c. C.E.)

With *En Kelohenu*, Sametz moves from the level of personal to the possibility of community transformation through prayer. He has modeled the piece on Franz Biebl's well-known *Ave Maria* structurally and harmonically. These musical references will be explored below.

In referencing a work familiar to many in the membership of ACDA, Sametz sought a touchstone that would immediately summon resonance that drew so many to choral singing: the interweaving of sonorities that mystically draws out the best in our singers. In the sense of choral community, *En Kelohenu* once again points toward the origin of mystery that arises when we sing together.

Joining Biebl's musical ideas with a traditional Jewish text also brings to the fore music's power to reach beyond individual and societal boundaries. Sametz is acknowledging the musical power of Biebl's earlier work to unite and elevate our spirits.

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Sametz comes from a Jewish tradition; Biebl served in the German Army during WW II, the same war Sametz's father fought in for the Americans. Sametz's choice of text, "ata hu moshienu" ["you are our Deliverer"] asks us whether, as a society, it is possible to be delivered from that enmity that keeps us from the *Ein Sof*, or eternal mystery. It is particularly in this very sonorous middle movement that Sametz is underscoring music as a language of transcendence and reconciliation.

The Indian mystic and poet Kabir (1440–1518) provides the text for the final piece in the trilogy. Kabir was born in Varanasi (Benares), India of Muslim parents, but later became a disciple of the Hindu bhakti saint Ramananda. He referred to himself as "a child of Allah and Ram," and his poetry is honored in Islamic, Hindu, and Sikh traditions.

Although a Muslim, Kabir's personal beliefs incorporated Hindu thought and philosophy. He spoke of the inherent unity of humanity and espoused the view that God could not be constrained by sectarian and religious divides. Much of his poetry reflects a universal view of spirituality and a rejection of religious dogma, both in Hinduism and Islam. In *Mē To Tere Paas Me* [*I Am Within You*], Kabir states numerous spiritual practices, pathways, and edifices that human-kind employs in the search for God; but he insists that God cannot be found in these practices, pathways, or edifices. Rather, we must come to the realization that the divine is within each of us. If we seek in earnest, we

may come to this realization through a single moment of faith.

Moko kahan dhundhere, bande, Mē to tere paas mein
Na teerath mein, na moorat mein, na ekant niwas mein
Na mandir mein, na masjid mein, na Khabe Khailash mein
Mē to tere paas mein, bande, mē to tere paas mein
Na mein jap mein, na mein tap mein, na mein barat upaas mein
Na mein kiriya karm mein, rehta nahin jog sanyas mein
Nahin pran mein, nahin pind mein, na brahmand akas mein
Na mein prakuti, prawar gufa mein, nahin swasan ki swans mein
Khoji hoye turat mil jaoon, ik pal ki talas mein
Kahet Kabir suno bhai sadho: mein to hun viswas mein

Where do you search for me, my devotee? I am within you
 Not in pilgrimage, not in signs, not in solitudes
 Not in temples, not in mosques, neither in Kaba nor in Kailash*
 Devotee, I am within you.
 I am not in prayers, nor in meditation, nor in resolutions of fasting,
 I am not in rituals of Karma; I do not dwell in yogic exercises, nor renunciation
 Not in vital force nor in the body, nor in the universal sky,
 Not in Nature, Not in the breath of the breath
 Seek in earnest; in one moment of the search
 Quickly, you shall find me out.
 Says Kabir; Listen well: I can be found in a single moment of faith.

—Kabir (1440-1518)
 Varanasi (Benares), India
 (English translation SS)

*Khabe, a stone in Mecca sacred to Islam.

Khailash, a Hindu worship place in the Himalayas where Shiva is said to live.

According to Kabir, regardless of our many human differences, we carry the divine within us; ultimately, we are all the same. It seems fitting that this poem concludes the set of pieces. Each text presents its own unique internal struggle, but the concluding statement is one of human unity and universal understanding. When questioned about his process in selecting texts for the Brock commission, Sametz responded with the following:

In crafting the set of pieces for the Brock commission, given the stipulation that the texts be sacred, I tried to see how encompassing the idea of 'sacred' could be. From many religious perspectives, the sacred most truly arises when duality is superceded, when a wholeness arises. In each of the pieces, I looked at a certain inner struggle—individually, societally, metaphysically—where, if the struggle itself were put aside, a clearing for the sacred would arise. Being able to appreciate how another prays deepens our understanding of the Divine. Yet all prayers point towards that which words can't encompass, but which may be better approached in song. *Three Mystical Choruses* brings together elements of Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh traditions. The keynote may be found in Kabir's expression that none of these traditions can claim exclusive property of the in-dwelling spirit.⁵

Music

Niño de Rosas – for SATB Chorus a cappella and mezzo-soprano solo
 (Three Mystical Choruses No. 1)

The refrain form proves an important structure for Sametz in *Three Mystical Choruses*, providing a strong unifying element with the contrasting texts. In each



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piece, the stanza and refrain build on the previous material in a pattern of continuous development.

Sametz sets *Niño de Rosas* for chorus and mezzo-soprano solo, casting the soloist as the gypsy girl, and restructures Jacinto's

poem to create a refrain:

<i>Niño de rosas,</i>	Child of roses
<i>dale a la gitanita</i>	give this little gypsy girl
<i>paga de glorias.</i>	glory as payment.

Starting as a 12/8 lullaby to the infant in c^\sharp minor, the soloist is gentle with the child, coaxing the infant to let her read his palm (Figure 1). As the lines of the refrain are intoned, an A^\sharp is added, creating a pentatonic chord on the dominant G sharp. This subtle

Figure 1. Steven Sametz, *Three Mystical Choruses*, “1. Niño de Rosas,” mm. 1 – 6.

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unite the refrain material, now presented antiphonally (measures 46–47), with a cadenza for the mezzo-soprano soloist. It begins with the plangent A^{\sharp}/G^{\sharp} (measure 49), echoing the interplay of the raised and lowered sixth that has been a motivic element in each of the refrain sections. (Figure 3) As she ends the “reading” of the infant Jesus’ palm, her line ascends gently (measure 52) as she makes her final request for payment, this time transformed, as is she herself: she now sees the *paga de glorias* [payment in glory] as a reality.

En Kelohenu – for SATB unaccompanied choir and antiphonal semi-choir (alternate voicings for TTBB and SSAA choirs also available) (Three Mystical Choruses No. 2)

27 **B** Tempo I *By three kings shall be venerated as a king, and at the same time.*

S *mf*
rás de tres reyes Rey re-con-o-ci-do, ya e-ste mis-mo tiem - -

A *mf*
rás de tres reyes Rey re-con-o-ci-do, ya e-ste mis-mo tiem - po

T *mp* *mf*
Se-rás de tres reyes Rey re-con-o-ci-do, ya e-ste mis-mo

B *mp* *mf*
Se-rás de tres reyes Rey re-con-o-ci-do, ya e-ste mis-mo

Figure 2. Steven Sametz, *Three Mystical Choruses*, “1. Niño de Rosas,” mm. 27 – 28.

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change of modality invokes a dimensional shift as the gypsy girl is entranced by the infant Jesus. Over the course of the three stanzas, it is the gypsy girl who undergoes a transformation: each time the refrain comes back, in harmonic elaboration or extension, she is taken more deeply into the divine

world of the child.

The contrasting center section, a canon in the treble and bass parts, represents a journey (one part following the other) as she foretells of the Magi crossing the desert to venerate the infant king (Figure 2). The ensuing refrain shifts this time to the major and extends the cadential material: it is an indication of the gypsy girl’s epiphany of the divine in the child. As she reads his palm in the final stanza, it is her grief we feel as the line ascends on the text:

ioh con qué prodigios!
A los treinta y tres,
dejarás la vida,
de amores rendido.

O, what wonders!
At thirty-three years
you will give up your life
exhausted by love.

The concluding measures (45–56)

The well-known structure of the Biebl piece opens with a chant alternating with three stanzas, ending in an ascending “amen” coda. Although not strictly in the Renaissance tradition of parody, where melodic elements would be borrowed from chansons or motets into a mass, *En Kelohenu* references the formal structure, antiphonal quality, and some of the harmonic language of Biebl’s *Ave Maria*.⁶

En Kelohenu also begins with a unison chant, which quickly expands into a four-voice choral texture. The first stanza borrows the quarter note rhythmic motive from the *Ave Maria* (Figure 4).

The antiphonal interplay from the semi-choir, referred to as “Brights” by Sametz in the score, begins as a chant in the tenor/bass line. The chant is constructed using a triplet *ostinato* motive and is presented throughout the piece. The most striking harmonic shift in Biebl’s *Ave Maria* is his use of a 9th chord built on the lowered seventh scale degree. This borrowed chord from the minor carries with it a strong feeling of Mixolydian. Sametz employs this same harmony moving

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Meno mosso $\text{♩} = 42$ give me alms, give this little gypsy girl

49 *p* < *mp* > *p* *mp* *mf*

M-S Solo da - me u - na li - mos - ni - ta, da - le a la gi - ta - ni - ta

S da - - - - me, da - me mm,

A da - - - - me, da - me mm,

T da - - - - me, da - me mm,

B da - - - - me, da - me mm,

p *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *pp*

mf

cadenza (freely)

Figure 3. Steven Sametz, *Three Mystical Choruses*, “1. Niño de Rosas,” mm. 49 – 52.

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$\text{♩} = 52$ *p* freely, like a chant You are our King, you are our deliverer.

Tenor Bass A - ta hu mal - ke - nu, A - ta hu mo - shi - e - nu.

4 [A] *p* *pp* There is none like our God, There is none like our Lord.

S En ke - lo - he - - - - nu, en ka - do - ne - nu, en k'mal

T En ke - lo - he - - - - nu, en ka - do - ne - - - - nu, en k'mal

“Brights” Tenor/Bass *p* *pp* En ke - lo - he - nu, en ka - do - ne - nu,

Figure 4. Steven Sametz, *Three Mystical Choruses*, “2. En Kelohenu,” mm. 1 – 6.

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Let us give thanks to our God, let us give thanks

mp *mf*

S A
e - - - - nu, no - de le - lo - he - nu, no - de la - do -

T B
e - - - - nu, no - de le - lo - he - nu, no - de la - do -

"Brights"
(T/B)
mi ch'mo-shi - e - nu, no - de le - lo - he - nu, *(div.)* *mf*

Figure 5. Steven Sametz, *Three Mystical Choruses*, "2. En Kelohenu," mm. 12 – 13.

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are now layered to create an eight-voice variation on the chant. The third stanza continues to vary the primary material and the antiphonal choir continues with the *ostinato* rhythmic pattern in the lower voices while introducing a descant in the upper parts.

As in Biebl's *Ave Maria*, where the third stanza has a more triumphant aspect ("sancta Maria"), Sametz uses the triplet *ostinato* motive in stanza three as a trumpet

into measure 13 of *En Kelohenu*, with the resolution to the tonic in the final cadence of measure 16 (Figure 5). Biebl duplicates these rhythmic, structural, and harmonic elements in his second stanza. Sametz, however, uses the opening stanza as a starting point for establishing these elements and then the succeeding stanzas develop, elaborate, and layer these elements to create a fantasia of continuous variation technique.

A new chant, now for trebles, introduces stanza two (Figure 6). The material in the principal choir is varied and lengthened and the antiphonal two-part, TB semi-choir is expanded to a four-part SATB choir. The move towards the lowered VII9 is now scored for ten-voices, the principal choir á 6 with the four-voice antiphonal choir.

For stanza three, the initial chant of the work and the treble chant of stanza two

call, layering the ascending lines of measures 43–44 (a reference to the "amen" section of the Biebl) with a much fuller variation on the harmonic density of the lowered VII9 chord. The soprano of the antiphonal choir, soaring to a high A#, leads to what appears to be the climactic moment analogous to the Biebl's ending "amen." But Sametz allows this moment to subside and proceeds to introduce one final allusion to the chant in measure

50, now presented in a full eight-part imitative texture as each of the voices multiplies the "thousand blessings" of the *baruch ata elohenu* [blessed art Thou, O Lord] (Figure 7). With one final presentation of the lowered VII9 (measure 54), the second of the *Three Mystical Choruses* closes quietly, layering the harmonies of the chants with the opening melodic motive, now

Blessed is our God, *Poco più mosso (unhurried)* *P*

S A
Ba-ruch e - lo - he - nu, ba - ruch a - do - ne - nu.

Blessed is our Lord, *poco rall.*

S A
Ba-ruch e - lo - he - nu, ba - ruch a - do - ne - nu.

Figure 6. Steven Sametz, *Three Mystical Choruses*, "2. En Kelohenu," mm. 17 – 19.

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[This final coda section should be an evenly divided 8-part texture]

50 **E** ♩ = 48

Figure 7. Steven Sametz, *Three Mystical Choruses*, “2. En Kelohenu,” mm. 50 – 52.

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presented in the alto 2 part of the second choir:

En Kelohenu does not have the dramatic through-line of the opening chorus, *Niño de Rosas*, but it possesses the refrain structure and the continuous development technique similar to the first and last choruses of the set.

Mē To Tere Paas Me - for SATB Chorus
(*divisi*) unaccompanied
(*Three Mystical Choruses* No. 3)

As the text and music of *Three Mystical Choruses* unfolds, the listener is taken on a sacred journey. The first chorus gives voice to the spiritual transformation of the individual and the second provides the opportunity for prayer in community; the final piece

of the collection moves toward the expression of the metaphysical aspect of the Divine. It is not surprising then that this work is a prism of timbral color through which aspects of the Divine are reflected musically.

Sametz sets Kabir's poetry in the original Hindi, the transliteration allowing for easy pronunciation. He incorporates colorful gong-like flutter tongue effects (repeated *chōn-n-n-n...*), sounds simulating digital delay on syllables taken from the traditional mantra *so-humm* (usually translated from the Hindi as *I am that*) and aleatoric writing simulating string *tremoli* (a technique Sametz used in his earlier tryptic, *Amo!*).

The first idea for *Mē To Tere Paas Me* came to Sametz after reading that Kabir was a weaver. To Sametz, this information suggested the sound of a loom with a shuttle passing back and forth.⁷ The opening syllables create a gentle pulsation, out of which arises an undulating line, similar to an Indian raga on the words, *mē to tere paas me*, [I am within you.]

Similar to *En Kelohenu*, there is a “Brights” semi-chorus that complements the main chorus. Sametz uses the “Brights” to provide additional color, a brightening of the sound palette, and to add a spatial dimension, increasing the sense of breadth in the piece.⁸ In this case, the antiphonal “Brights” also reinforce the textual idea of “not here” as the lines are passed back and forth in a kind of hide and seek. That hide and seek quality inherent in Kabir's poetry is reflected in



Steven Sametz's *Three Mystical Choruses*

Sametz's presentation and development of the thematic material. Sametz here creates a *quasi sonata-rondo* form with extended coda,

using the timbral introductory sonorities [I] (Figure 8), the thematic material for the setting of the line, *mē to tere paas me* [m]

(Figure 9), and the more fluid contrasting raga-like lines {r} (Figure 10). Sametz moves quickly from one tonal center to the next,

Figure 8. Steven Sametz, *Three Mystical Choruses*, “3. Mē To Tere Paas Me,” mm. 1 – 4.

[I] - introductory timbral sonorities

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13 *I am within you.*

"Brights" (S/A) *mp* *ppp* *mp* *ppp*
 chōn-n-n... so - humm, so - humm, so - humm,

S *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *ppp*
 Mē to te - re paas me, to te - re paas me,

A *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *ppp*
 Mē to te - re paas me, to te - re paas, Mē to te - re paas me, so - humm, so - humm,

T *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *mp* *ppp*
 Mē to te - re paas me, Mē to te - re paas me, so - humm, so -

B *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *mp* *ppp*
 Mē to te - re paas me, Mē to te - re paas me, chōn-n-n-n, n-n-n-n

Figure 9. Steven Sametz, *Three Mystical Choruses*, "3. Mē To Tere Paas Me," mm. 13 – 16.
 [m] - thematic material for the text, "mē to tere paas me"

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5 *Where do you search for me, my devotee?*

"Brights" (S/A) *p* *mp* *pp* *fp* *ppp* *mp*
 Mo - ko__ ka - han dhun - dhe-re, bunn - de, chōn n...
close to "n" immediately

S *fp* *ppp* *p* *mf* *pp*
 chōn Mo - ko__ ka - han dhun - dhe-re, bunn - de,
close to "n" immediately

A *mp* *pp* *fp* *mp*
 Mo - ko__ ka - han dhun - dhe-re, bunn - de, chōn n...
close to "n" immediately

T *fp* *mp* *mp* *pp*
 chōn n... Mo - ko__ ka - han dhun - dhe-re, bunn - de,
close to "n" immediately

Figure 10. Steven Sametz, *Three Mystical Choruses*, "3. Mē To Tere Paas Me," mm. 5 – 6.
 {r} - raga-like material

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Steven Sametz's *Three Mystical Choruses*

expanding and contracting the palate of colors to produce an aural glow.

Perhaps the most effective means by which to illustrate this tonal movement is to provide the pitch centers and thematic material as they are developed throughout the work (Table 1).

Not strictly a refrain form as in the first two choruses, *Mē To Tere Paas Me* represents the continuous variation idea in the overall structure of the set of *Three Mystical Choruses*, as the refrain form is expanded and relaxed. Within the last chorus, there is again the continuous variation idea, as each of the three elements—[i], [m], {r}—is developed with each iteration.

Chanticleer will present the world premiere of *Three Mystical Choruses* at the ACDA National Convention on Wednesday, March 9, 2011, and the set will be published by EC Schirmer. In summarizing the compositional impetus behind the *Three Mystical Choruses*, Sametz writes:

For me, all religions point to the idea of a mystical source, whether it be called *Ein Sof*, *Unio Mystica*, the peace that passes understanding, or *Tat Avam Asi*. As no dogma is able to concretize the sacred, neither can mere words adequately describe a musical experience—particularly that deeply resonant experience that choral music allows. And as contact with mystical sources takes us beyond ourselves, choral singing by nature enhances us personally as it takes us beyond the personal. That we can experience

this harmony communally is perhaps the greatest of wonders. My hope

is that the Brock commission pieces will point toward the greatness that

Table 1 Pitch Center and Thematic Material

Measures	Thematic Material	Tonality/Commentary
Introduction (a-b-a)		
1–4 (repeated)	I	(E ^b centered, moving to D ^b)
5–6	{r}	(D ^b Lydian)
9–10	I	(D ^b -centered moving to C ^b)
A1		
13–16	[m] (mein to tere paas me)	(E ^b centered)
17–25	{r} developed and extends	A ^b -pentatonic/introduced C ^b creating iv7-pentatonic
26–29	[m]	alternates harmonies of {r} 17–25, now in the context of [R]
A2 (features quicker alternation of the basic material)		
30–31	{r}	continues the harmonies of A ¹
32–33, 33–34	[m]+I	
36–37	I+[m]	
B1 (parallel structure throughout, moving circle of 5ths)		
38–42;	{r}+I	move to D ^b center toward G ^b
43–45	{r}+I	move to C ^b center toward F ^b
B2		
46–50	{r}+I	C ^b centered/pentatonic
51–55	{r}+I	
B3 (Codetta)		
56–59	{r}+I	G ^b /C ^b 9
C aleatoric sections serves as codetta to the center section		
60–68	quasi string tremolo	beginning from dec. cad. to A ^b (mediant to the F ^b), culminating on D ^b (with the altered Gnat 11th)
69–76	[i]	recapitulation E ^b centered moving to D ^b
77–88	{r}	whole-tone starting on C ^b , altering back to V/D ^b , cadence in mediant (F ^b) become N6 in E ^b .
Coda		
89–94	metricized version of C	E ^b -Lydian, rising to IV
95–100 (repeated)	[i]	E ^b -Lydian
101–104	{r} from 88 with voicing from 77	
105–116	[i]	ending material resolves the harmonies of E ^b -Lydian to E ^b major.

Three Mystical Choruses

Published by E.C. Shirmer

I. Niño de Rosas	7711
II. En Kelohenu	mixed chorus version - 7712
	treble chorus version - 7713
	men's chorus version - 7714
III. Mě To Tere Paas Me	7715

choral music invites and in some way, may find a place in that long tradition of choral singing that is still very much alive today.⁹

NOTES

¹ Busse, Thomas. "Queer Music in Pride Week : San Francisco Classical Voice." *San Francisco Classical Voice: Classical Music in the Bay Area*. June 24, 2008. Web. Oct. 14, 2010. <<http://www.sfcv.org/reviews/queer-music-pride-week>>.

² Boyer, Douglas R. "Musical Influence and Style in the Choral Music of Steven Sametz." *Choral Journal* May 2002: 21–34. Print.

³ "Raymond W. Brock Memorial Commission." American Choral Directors Association. Ed. Ryan Reynolds. Web. Oct. 14, 2010. <http://acda.org/archive/brock_pieces>.

⁴ Scheib, By Ariel. "Ein Keloheinu." *Jewish Virtual Library-Homepage*. Web. Oct. 15, 2010. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/ein_keloheinu.html>.

⁵ Sametz, Steven. <sps0@lehigh.edu> "Text discussion" Nov. 3, 2010. Personal email. (Nov. 3, 2010).

⁶ Sametz, Steven. <sps0@lehigh.edu> "En Kelohenu"

10 Nov. 2010. Personal email. (10 Nov. 2010).

⁷ Sametz, Steven. <sps0@lehigh.edu> "No 3" Nov. 13, 2010. Personal email. (Nov. 13, 2010).

⁸ Sametz' use of a "Brights" semi-chorus is also found in his unaccompanied setting of E. E. Cummings' *in time of* and Whitman's *We Two Boys Together Clinging*.

⁹ Sametz, Steven. <sps0@lehigh.edu> "Brock Commission" Nov. 17, 2010. Personal e-mail. (Nov. 17, 2010).



Steven Sametz Choral Works

Chorus and Orchestra

American Songs—Sacred and Profane (Texts by Driscoll and Elliot) Baritone solo, large orchestra, chorus

1) A Way of Talking to A Dog You Don't Know

2) Blood Love

3) At Being Buried, My Surprise (chorus only in number 3).

Carmina amoris (Medieval love songs). Choral Symphony in 6 movements. 2 Soprano soloists (one off-stage) and tenor solo, large orchestra and choir

cent fois plus ombre... Text by Robert Desnos. (Cimbalon, hammer dulcimer, harp, electric piano, onde martenot, vibraphone, marimba, harpsichord, percussion, flute, alto flute, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 bassoons, 3 horns and off-stage horn; off-stage women's chorus (SSAA) and organ.) Commissioned for the centennial celebration of Packer Memorial Church, Lehigh University. Premiered 1987.

Colloque sentimental, Text by Paul Verlaine. (Flute, oboe, clarinet, bassett horn, bass clarinet, harp, celeste, vibraphone, percussion, chorus, baritone solo, incidental SSAA soli, organ, strings, off-stage strings.) 1977.

in time of Text by e.e. cummings. (2 flutes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, harp, organ, SATB choir, SATB soli, 2 SSA childrens' choirs, divided string orchestras.) 1995. (Two other versions, see a cappella and works for chorus and small instrumental ensembles). Published by E.C. Shirmer

muji no makotoba (Scripture without words). Text by Hakuin Ekaku. (4 flutes- doubling piccolo, alto, and bass flutes; B-flat clarinet doubling bass clarinet, C-trumpet, piano/synthesizer, celesta, harp, percussion, SATB chorus, soprano solo, strings.) Commissioned for the 250th anniversary celebration of the city of Bethlehem, PA. 1991.

The White Raven. Text based on Tlingit creation myth. ballet concerto for piano, orchestra and chorus. (2 flutes, 2d fl doubles picc; oboe, English horn; 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, percussion, harp, strings) Premiered April, 2005. Eugene Albulescu, piano.

Works for Chorus and Small Instrumental Ensembles or Obligato Instruments

Alleluia for two (or four) part choir, handbells, opt. harp. 2002 . Published by Oxford University Press.

Alleluia-Amen SATB, organ, and brass. (optional harp and percussion)1993. Published by E.C. Shirmer.

Angel Fire—A Christmas Anthem. Text by Peter Elliot. SATB, organ, handbells, 3 trumpets, optional harp and additional brass. Commissioned by the Cathedral Choral Society. Premiere at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., 2002



Steven Sametz's *Three Mystical Choruses*

Angelus. SATB and handbells (optional harp). Commissioned by The Princeton Singers. Published by EC Schirmer, 2005.

Child of Song for SATB chorus, alto flute, clarinet, horn, percussion and harp. Published by EC Schirmer, 2009.

The Choir Invisible for SATB chorus, organ, harp and percussion. Commissioned by the South Bend Chamber Choir. South Bend, Indiana. 2006.

The Demon King. Traditional Sanskrit text. SATB, Indian ensemble, narrators, and puppet. With Arati Shah-Yukich. Premiered by Lehigh University Choral Arts, 1996.

Desert Voices. (Seven movements.) Native American texts. SATB, soprano solo, and chamber ensemble (Flute doubles piccolo and alto flute, clarinet, cello, harp, piano, percussion.) Commissioned for the Santa Fe Desert Chorale. Premiere Santa Fe, NM, 1993.

Dulcis amor. Text by Alcuin. TTBB with tenor and baritone solos. Optional harp. Optional orchestration with 2 cls, 2 bsns, 4 hns and harp. Commissioned by the Harvard Glee Club. 2004.

Echoes. Text by Gerard Manley Hopkins. (Double choir, water glasses, amplified harp and percussion.) Commissioned as a National Endowment for the Arts composer consortium grant for the Philadelphia Singers, the Dale Warland Singers, and the Washington Chamber Singers with Chanticleer. 1988.

Fantasia on Call to Remembrance for SATB choir and digitally delayed oboe. Commissioned for The Princeton Singers, 2011.

Fantasia on Jesu, meine Freude for SATB choir and digitally delayed Baroque recorder or other treble instrument. (2009)

in time of. Text by e.e. cummings. (SATB choir, SATTB soli, 2 SSA childrens' choirs, 4 violins, harp, and organ.) 1995. Oxford University Press, 2002. Reissued by E.C. Shirmer, 2011

Laudare. Text by Constance Carrier. SATB (with opt. SATB off-stage choir), string quartet and piano. Commissioned by Connecticut Choral Artists. Premiere November, 1999.

The Maji. SATB and brass quintet. 1995.

Music's Music SATB-SATB, SA soli and harp, Commissioned by the Los Angeles Master Chorale. Published by E.C. Shirmer, 2009.

Nevermore Will the Wind. Text by H.D. (Hilda Doolittle). SAT-SATB; horn, percussion, harp. Commissioned by The Princeton Singers. Published by E.C. Shirmer, 2002

Nunc Dimittis (He Gives Us Joy). Text from Song of Simeon (Luke 2:25-32) and lines from William Blake's "Songs of Experience" and "Songs of Innocence." (Strings, harp, percussion, organ, SATB chorus, tenor and baritone solos.) Commissioned by the Bucks County Choral Society. 1997.

Processional Sanctus. (Double choir, brass quintet, percussion, organ.) Premiered by Lehigh University Choral Arts, 1997.

The Return. Text by Gordon Edwards. (Violin, oboe, violoncello, harp, piano, percussion, SA choir, soprano solo.) Commissioned by Pro Arte Singers, New Canaan, CT. 1997.

Sanctus. (Double choir, SSA solos, 3 violins, cello, bass, organ, percussion.) Premiered by Lehigh University Choral Arts, 1997.

Shamalyo, (with Arati Shah-Yukich) for soloist, tabla and choir premiered by The Princeton Singers, 2007.

The Twenty-ninth Bather. SSA, vc., marimba. Commissioned by The Princeton Singers, 2009. See also a cappella version.

Voices of Broken Hearts SSA choir and digitally delayed vibraphone. Commissioned by the Wellesley College Choir. Premiered at the American Choral Director's Association convention, February 13, 2009. Published by E.C. Schirmer.

Choir and Organ/Piano

del nacimiento (Of the Birth). Text by Saint John of the Cross. Unison choir and harmonium (organ); optional harp and violin. 1987.

I Cannot Dance, O Lord. SSA and organ. Text by Mechtild of Magdeburg. 2004 Commissioned by Berks Classical Children's Chorus. Published by E.C. Schirmer.

The Light Within. SATB and keyboard or harp. Text by Peter Elliot based on 2 Corinthians 4: 7, 16-18. Commissioned by the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship, 2003. GIA Press, 2004

Magnificat. SATB and organ. Premiered by Lehigh University Choir, 1996. Oxford University Press, 2000.

Perhaps They Are Not Stars. Inuit text. Treble choir and piano. Commissioned by the Lower Macungie Middle School. 2002. Published by Walton Music.

Unless the Lord Build the House. SATB Choir, treble choir, treble soloist, handbells. Commissioned by the Princeton United Methodist Church, Princeton, New Jersey. 2000.

You are a Letter from Christ. Text from Corinthians II 3: 2-3; additional text by the composer. Commissioned by The Texas Lutheran University Choir. Douglas Boyer, director. 2003 (also see a cappella version)

Unaccompanied choir

Amo! Texts of Alcvin and Baudri of Bourgeuil. Published by E.C. Schirmer

1. Munus (A Gift) SATB. Commissioned by the Harvard-Ratcliffe Collegium Musicum, Jameson Marvin, director (optional harp)
2. Dulcis amor (Sweet Love) TTBB, tenor-baritone soli. Commissioned by the Harvard Glee Club, Jameson Marvin, director (optional harp)
3. Amo! (Madrigal) SATB. Commissioned by the Princeton Singers (optional harp)

A Christmas Carol. SATB-SATB. Medieval text (Gloire be to God). Commissioned by The Princeton Singers, 2007.

The Crocodile. Text by Lewis Carroll. TB. 1986.

Five Sandburg Settings. Text by Carl Sandburg. Commissioned by the Pro Arte Chamber Singers and the Connecticut Council on the Arts, 1989.

1. Vaudeville Dancer
2. Baby Face
3. Joy
4. The Junk Man
5. Alone and Not Alone.

Dudaryku—A Village Scene. Traditional Ukrainian Texts. Commissioned by The Princeton Singers for performance with Chanticleer, Published by E.C. Shirmer, 2001.

La Eternidad. SATB. Text by Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz. Commissioned by the Phoenix Bach Choir. Published by E.C. Shirmer, 2004

Everyone Sang. Text by Siegfried Sassoon. SATB. Commissioned by the University of Illinois Choir. 2002

Gabriel! A Tennessee Christmas Cantata. Text by Deborah Sakarakis. SATB. Soprano solo. Premiered Lehigh University Choir. 1987.

I Have Had Singing. SSATB (SSAA and TTBB versions available, optional chamber orchestra). Text from Ronald Blythe. Published by Steven Sametz Publications (SSP001). 1993.

in time of. Text by e.e. cummings. SATB divisi version written as part of National Endowment for the Arts composer grant for Chanticleer. Premiere April 1997. Published by E.C. Shirmer.

Love Was Born Here in a Child. Text by Deborah Sacarakis. Christmas motet. SSAAATTTB. 1982.



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Mindful of You. Text by Edna St. Vincent Millay. SATB. Commissioned by The Cavalier Voices of JT Lambert Intermediate School, East Stroudsburg, PA. Premiere 2009.

Noel. TTBB. Published Alliance Music Publications (AMP-0089) 1995. Recorded by Chanticleer on Sing We Christmas. Teldec.

Not an End of Loving. Commissioned for Chanticleer by the Lehigh University Union to celebrate the 25th anniversary season. 2010.

- 1) Where I Become you (text by Antjie Krog)
- 2) We Two Boys Together Clinging (text by Walt Whitman) see also version for tenor, bass, vibraphone and violoncello.
- 3) Not an End of Loving (text by Alcuin of York; translation Waddell)

¡O llama de amor viva! A Mystical Vision of Saint John of the Cross. Two versions: SATBB and ATBBB. Commissioned for Chanticleer. 1987. Recorded by Chanticleer on With a Poet's Eye. Teldec.

On the Death of a Friend. Versions for TTBB, baritone solo, and SATB. Text by H.S. Holland. Commissioned for the Alamo City Men's Chorale, San Antonio, Texas. 1997.

Peace on Earth. SATB. Text by Edward Gordon. SATB. Commissioned by Staples HS, Westport, CT. 2000. Published by Oxford University Press.

Seal. Text by Jeremy Driscoll. SATB choir, baritone solo. 1994.

The Twenty-ninth Bather. SSAA. Commissioned by The Princeton Singers, 2009. See also version with small instrumental accompaniment.

Three Mystical Choruses. Commissioned by the American Choral Director Association's Raymond W. Brock Memorial Commission, 2011. Published by E.C. Schirmer.

1. Niño de Rosas (*Child of Roses*)
2. En Kelohenu (*There Is None Like Our God*)
3. MĒ To Tere Paas Me (*I Am Within You*)

Two Love Songs of St. John of the Cross. Commissioned by The Princeton Singers. Text by St. John of the Cross. SSAA choir. Premiered 2008

1. Luz y amor (Light and Love)
2. Mi amado (My Beloved)

Two Medieval Lyrics Commissioned for Chanticleer. 1995. Oxford University Press, 2000. SATB, soprano solo.

1. There Is No Rose Of Such Virtue
2. Gaudete.

Two poems of John Igo. SATB. (#2 with harp.) 1985.

1. Will I Love You?
2. I Was Drowning in Grass.

Thou Whose Birth. SATB (optional harp). Text from the Christmas Antiphons of C.A. Swinburne. Commissioned by the Choral Society of Durham. 2007

When He Shall Die. Text from Shakespeare. SATB. Commissioned by Central Bucks-West High School. (In memoriam Louis Botto.) Oxford University Press, 1999.

y berenjenas con queso ("and eggplants with cheese") Renaissance Spanish text. SATB. 1995. Published by E.C. Schirmer

You are a Letter from Christ. Text from Corinthians II 3: 2-3; additional text by the composer. Commissioned by The Texas Lutheran University Choir. Douglas Boyer, director. 2003 (also version for choir and keyboard)

You Stepped Out of Heaven. SATB. 1990.

Arrangements

Calvary. Tenor solo and choir. Published by Walton Music, 2007.

The Guiding Light. SATB with Orchestra. Commissioned for the 6th Cycle Birthday celebration for the King of Thailand. November, 1999

The Heroine Triumphant. Medley of 1890's Melodies. SATB. Oxford University Press, February, 2000

Irish Lullaby for the Christ Child. Gaelic poem. SSAA, soprano solo, optional harp. 1995. Published Alliance Music Publications (AMP-0088) 1995

Kas Tie Tadi. Latvian folk song. SATB. Alliance Music Publications (AMP-0087) 1995.

Kein Feuer, Keine Kohle kann brennen so heiss. German Folksong. SATB Oxford University Press, 1999

Ne sedi, Djemo (Bosnian Folksong) Oxford University Press, 2002

Ngam Sang Duan (Shining Moon). Thai folk song. SATB. Oxford University Press, 2000

Pai duli. Russian Folksong. SATB. Oxford University Press. February, 2000

Los Pastores. Chicano Christmas songs. SATB. Published by Oxford University Press, 2002

La Villanella. Italian Folksong. SATB. Oxford University Press, 1999

Shenandoah. American Folksong. SSAATTBB. Oxford University Press, 2002

Silent Night. Franz Grueber. SSATTB. 2005

Wondrous Love. Southern American folk song. SSAB (may be used for congregational singing), handbells, optional harp. Oxford University Press, 2000

Discography

Princeton Singers CD, *I Have Had Singing*. Steven Sametz, director. Complete information at <http://www.arsisaudio.com/cd161N.html>. Guest artists include Chanticleer, John Aler (tenor), Elem Eley (baritone), The Resident Training Choir of the American Boychoir School, and Trebles from the Princeton High School Choir. Works include: *I Have Had Singing, in time of, Magnificat; Dudaryku – A Village Scene; Two Medieval Lyrics (There Is No Rose and Gaudete); Amo! (Munus, Dulcis amor, and Amo! (Madrigal); Child of Song, Shenandoah*. All works published by Oxford or E.C. Schirmer.

Alleluia. Lehigh University Choral Arts. *What Wondrous Love Is This*. 2000

del nacimiento. The Princeton Singers. *Christmas with the Princeton Singers*. 2000

Dudaryku – A Village Scene. Princeton Singers with Chanticleer. *Old, New, Borrowed, Blues*. 2002.

Dulcis amor. Recorded by The Harvard Glee Club, Albany Records. 2007.

I Have Had Singing.

-Chanticleer. *Out Of This World*. Teldec. 1994. Re-released on *Reflections*. Teldec. 1997 .

-Michael O'Neal Chamber Singers (2007) title track.

I Cannot Dance, O Lord (choral version, SSA with organ). Arsis recordings. 2007.

Irish Lullaby for the Christ Child.

- *Christmas with The Princeton Singers*. 2000.

- Vocal Arts Ensemble of Cincinnati, Earl Rivers, conductor. Pro Organo. 2005.

Noel.

- Chanticleer. *Sing We Christmas*. Teldec.

- *Christmas with The Princeton Singers*. 2000.

La Villanella. (Italian folk song.)

- Chanticleer. *Wonderous Love*. Teldec. 1997

- Princeton Singers. *Old, New, Borrowed, Blues*



Steven Sametz's *Three Mystical Choruses*

Los Pastores (Chicano Christmas anthem) The Princeton Singers. *Christmas with The Princeton Singers*. 2000.

in time of. (text by e.e. cummings)

- Chanticleer. *Colors of Love*. Teldec 3984-24570-2. 1999

- The Princeton Singers. *Reincarnations*. Ethereal Recordings. 1999

Kein Feuer, Keine Kohle. (German Folksong) Princeton Singers. *Old, New, Borrowed, Blues*. 2002.

Magnificat. The Princeton Singers. *Reincarnations*. *Ethereal Recordings*. 1999

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