

Daniel Pinkham's Published Music For Chorus and Electronic Tape

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Daniel Pinkham's interest in electronic tape with choral music began in the late 1960's, but it was not until 1970 that his first work of that genre was published. He credits Richard Felciano, the California composer, with much of his stimulation and expertise in this area. Felciano's examples helped him develop and refine the mechanical sound source production for music employing electronic tape.

My first introduction to works with tape and chorus came in 1970 when we performed Richard Felciano's *Pentecost Sunday* at King's Chapel during the Whitsunday Service. That marvelous piece convinced me that I could adapt the resources of tape to my own musical personality and enlarge the color possibilities of accompanied choral repertoire. My first work, *In the beginning of creation*, commissioned by Westminster Choir College, was written in 1970. I subsequently met Richard Felciano and he proved to be a major influence in my creative thinking in the following years.(1)

During the past decade Pinkham has established a reputation as one of the leading composers writing for chorus and tape. He has produced 16 choral works which are currently available to conductors; all are published by E. C. Schirmer Music Company. These works have varying levels of difficulty with some requiring other instruments such as organ, percussion and string orchestra for performance. Only four works are secular. They are: *Two Poems of Howard Holtzman*; *To Troubled Friends*; *Witching Hour*; and *Going and Staying*. This interest in writing music

for the church has made a profound influence on the direction of church music in the last ten years. Although it is still not common to find liturgical services where music using electronic tape may be heard, it is now at least not uncommon to attend these services.

It is outside the delimitations to this article, yet noteworthy that Pinkham has also composed music using tape with organ, other instruments, solo voice, and music for tape alone. Most of these works also relate to a Biblical genesis and they may be broadly categorized as sacred rather than secular.(2)

Not all of Pinkham's compositions since 1970 has resulted in works using tape. He has continued to compose music using only traditional notation and instruments. Some of his earlier works such as the cantatas for Christmas and Easter continue to receive an extensive number of performances by church, school and professional choirs.

For purposes of this article Pinkham's choral/tape works have been divided into three categories: Music for Chorus and Tape; Music for Chorus, Organ and Tape; Music for Chorus, Tape, and Other Instruments or Soloists. Each work will be discussed briefly with commentary on both the printed score and the electronic tape sounds.

MUSIC FOR CHORUS AND TAPE

There are four works which use only chorus and tape and they include: *In the beginning of creation* (1790); *Two Poems of Howard Holtzman* (1974); *The Lament of David* (1974); and, *Amens* (1975). All use mixed chorus except the *Two Poems of Howard Holtzman* which is for women's chorus.

In the beginning of creation, his first published tape work, is probably his most

frequently performed chorus/tape piece, and is certainly one of the easiest. Except for a final chord, the chorus is in unison. They are called upon to sing, speak, whisper and create independent vocal sounds, at times imitating the tape sounds. Each musical event has an individual character so that the work really consists of several ideas strung together in succession making the performance less challenging. The directions for each event are clearly explained in the score *beneath* the time frame in which they occur. This greatly aids the performer and conductor. Many of his later works have detailed instructions at the beginning with less detailed explanations within the actual score.

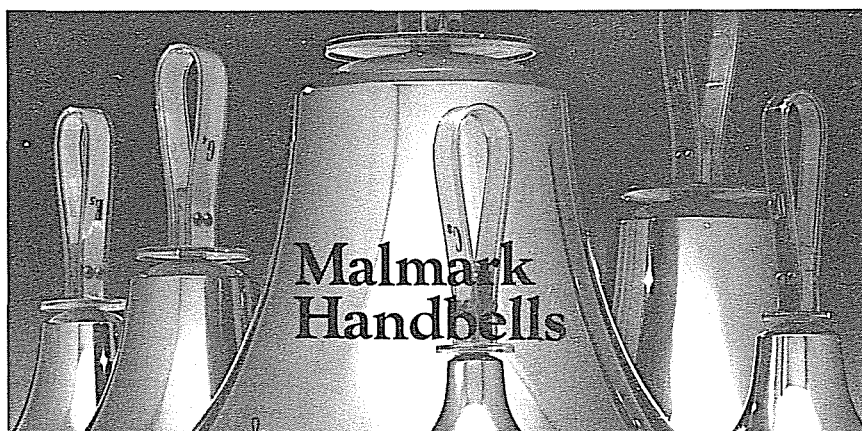
The text tells the story of Creation. It is partly sung and partly spoken and only includes the first three verses of Genesis. The duration is 3:08 with a score of but three pages length. In addition to the verbal instructions, there are also visual items which help chart the tape sounds. The speaking chorus has varying pitch levels.

The tape begins with wind-like sounds from which emerges the note G-natural, the pitch and cue for the unison chorus. Other types of sounds are whirring, grinding, explosions with and without echo reverberations and tinkly bells representing light. These intimate and rapidly repeating bells conclude the piece by disappearing into the distance as a comet of light.

Two Poems of Howard Holtzman employs a two-part women's chorus and tape. The first poem, "I sought that land" lasts only 2'40" and remains in a two-part SA setting throughout. The second poem, "On beachy head" is primarily for unison chorus and is shorter in length. The vocal lines are linear in construction and often quite dissonant. They follow a syllabic setting and both parts have the same rhythms.

This author commissioned these pieces and was involved in their premiere with the Longwood College Women's Choir. As is often the case with contemporary music, the chorus did not find the music appealing during the initial rehearsals. For them, the interval skips and dissonances caused considerable difficulty; however, once they overcame these problems and worked with the tape, they became quite fond of the music.

These pieces could be performed by an advanced high school girls' chorus although there are a few low notes for the alto section. There are tempo changes, and fermata areas aid in the proper pacing with the tape, but the composer indicates that exact synchronization throughout is not necessary as long as certain significant areas are matched properly.



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The tape creates an atmosphere for the chorus, but remains somewhat detached from their music. It begins 30 seconds prior to the chorus entrance and it is from the tape that the chorus finds their initial pitch in both movements. The pitch cues are very obvious on the tape and pose no significant difficulty for them. The sounds on the tape are, for the most part, attractive and they never dominate the chorus.

The Lament of David is 15 pages in length and considerably more difficult for the chorus than the other two earlier works. There are areas where the women and men sing separately in a three-part texture. The chorus begins and ends the work on the text "How are the men of war fallen!", in a composite textural sound which is singing, speaking, murmuring and buzzing. This vagueness creates a moaning effect which also occurs on the tape. The vocal lines are at times harshly dissonant and often quite chromatic. To facilitate the singers, enharmonic spellings are sometimes used, and the tessitura is general high.

There are numerous tempo changes and variations in mood with many of the sections only one page long. Shifting articulations of staccato, tenuto and marcato are used. The chorus also closes on consonants such as "n" and sustains them through a fermata.

The tape begins after the chorus has started to hum in a low range, yet they still find their beginning singing pitch from the tape. It is necessary to have the tape stopped each time a section is completed, but the choral and tape areas overlap each other so that the audience is unaware of a conclusion. The tape has whistling sounds which evolve into falling siren sounds. Later there are bell-like areas and rapid bullet types of rhythmic pulsations in conjunction with whirring sounds. This work will be moderately difficult for the conductor to control and requires an adult choir for performance.

Amens places extensive responsibility on members of the chorus to perform as individuals, and even though it is only six pages long, its duration is 5:37. The text consists of Biblical fragments all of which conclude with the word "amen." The work is not especially difficult and except for a few isolated dissonances, very tonal. A solid bass section with a low F is needed for many of the chant-like areas, and they must sustain the F with constant repetitions.

Pinkham combines free unsynchronized areas with metrical notation. Some random selection of the order of events occurs in several sections where the individual chorus member sings given phrases in a strict time. At the end there

are 10 phrases of one measure's duration on the text "amen" which are individually assigned to chorus members; they sing their assigned phrase repeatedly until the conductors cues them to sustain the "n" of amen on a designated pitch which creates a tone cluster.

The score contains time indications for the tape but no pictures of the sounds produced. The conductor must rely on the stop watch for cues although in some places the number of bell-like strokes on the tape serve as cues.

The tape runs for the duration of work and the chorus finds their pitch and tempo from the constant pulsation of the tape sounds. A myriad of sound types are employed such as whirring effects, descending whistles that spiral downward, and busy watery sounds of gurgling in conjunction with a blowing wind. Other effects include an ostinato figure that goes and stops several times and some sounds which resemble that of an electronic piano. Speakers need to be placed on both sides and behind the chorus for performance.

MUSIC FOR CHORUS. ORGAN
AND TAPE

There are four works which employ organ, but one, *Evergreen*, permits other keyboard substitutions if desired. Works using organ are *The Seven Last Words*



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PINKHAM . . .

of *Christ on the Cross* (1971), *The Call of Isaiah* (1971), *O Depth of Wealth* (1974), and *Evergreen* (1974). None of the organ music is particularly difficult, but *The Seven Last Words* has the most extensive writing for the instrument of those in this category.

The *Seven Last Words of Christ on the Cross* places more emphasis on the soloists than the chorus. The Evangelist is a bass-baritone and his material comprises almost half of the entire work. The other two soloists represent the criminals crucified at the same time as Christ and their texts are sung by a tenor and a baritone. The chorus sings the words of Christ and is in an SATB divisi setting of highly dissonant chords. Full voice ranges are used and even though the organ is usually doubling the voices, the choral parts will be difficult to sing. At one point the men must sing in a falsetto which gives an eerie quality to the music.

The work is divided into sections for each of the seven words. It is 14 pages long and has a total duration of almost 10 minutes. The vocal lines for the soloists have a recitative quality to them, but they are very chromatic and have wide intervallic skips making them difficult to sing.

The organ material is conceived linearly with registration indications for a division of Great and Swell plus areas which are coupled. The choice of stops is left to the performer. Even though its prime function is to support the singers, there are brief organ flourishes and one moment where 12 pitches are depressed in a free rhythm and held for four seconds in a quiet and mysterious tone cluster.

The tape is in seven sections, one for each word with three seconds of silence between them. The basic sound which recurs is that of a whistle. Other sounds which are heard are whirring, wind, humming and a siren effect on an upward glissando with a crashing background and echo. At times the sounds are extremely harsh. The sections connect and overlapping occurs with the organ and tape giving a better cohesion to the piece.

The Call of Isaiah may be sung by a mixed, men's or women's chorus. It requires an organ but has optional percussion. The work is less than five minutes duration, but employs numerous special effects.

The choral parts are written on a single staff and are generally in unison or two parts, although some divisi chords are used in selected places. They have some speaking areas un pitched, yet sung, and sections which will result in an in-

determinate pitch where the general level, but not specific pitch is indicated.

The unique feature is on the second page which is an aleatoric passage notated as a circle of musical rhythm around a square of arabic numbers. The square was published in 12th-century Toledo and serves as a random set of instructions for the organist who must create an improvisatory keyboard part based on guidelines set forth in the performance notes. Except for that improvisatory section, the organ is only used for a single punctuated chord at several places throughout.

The percussion material occurs here also with the events placed in boxes resulting in a flexible performance situation. The percussion is also used at the end of the work in a more traditional notation.

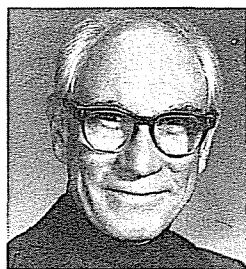
The tape is continuous with the notation indicated by a time line above the vocal music. There is an Eastern character to some of the sounds which are undulating and resemble gongs. Other types of sound are saw-like giving the effect of a buzzsaw creating glissandi up and down. A clave sound which has tapping rhythms is overlapped with whirring.

This work is not as difficult as it first seems, and could be performed by a high school or church choir. It is a very creative piece that clearly shows the influence of Felciano.

O depth of wealth follows a block-chord homophonic treatment. These chords are usually very dissonant, and at times doubled by the organ. There are no unusual demands on the chorus other than those inherent in the actual pitches of the chords they produce. This work was written for a church choir. The amount of new material is limited and on two staves; a series of chords are used throughout in several arrangements. Only 5 pages in length, this anthem contains several tempo changes and moves from a quiet introspective beginning to a joyful and loud ending that resolves to a gigantic D-major chord.

The organ music is very simple, and, as with the chorus, little more than a succession of chords. It, too, is written on two staves and Pinkham indicates that it is possible to substitute a piano for the organ if necessary.

The tape sounds are interjected at the ends of phrases and generally are used as an elision rather than a joint force for the chorus, except during the final celebrative section where all events occur simultaneously. The tape sounds are mysterious in character. They are sustained with some echo effects and a vibrato quality which has various widths. There are rhythmic pulsations and at



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times bells with echos emerge out of a busy background.

Evergreen is a simple two-page Christmas carol for unison chorus, tape and optional instruments including organ. These instruments play an ostinato pattern and include autoharp, bells, harp, guitar and piano. This flexibility of orchestration and unison makes this charming piece accessible to almost any choir. It will have the same effectiveness with the voices of children or adults. A repeated verse is followed by a separate coda which gives the work greater length.

The vocal line has gentle curves and is quite "tuneful." The optional instruments add to the calmness of the mood, and their music is so simple that even the most inexperienced novice can perform them.

The tape consists of hundreds of little bell-like sounds which are heard at random intervals giving a "starlight" quality to the piece. There is no coordination between the tape and the chorus other than the fact they are sounding at the same time. The tape is played independently of the choir so that the conducting and timing problems are eliminated.

There is an innocence to this slow and serene carol. It will be a favorite with performers and audience, and is destined

to be one of Pinkham's most frequently performed tape works.

MUSIC FOR CHORUS, TAPE AND OTHER INSTRUMENTS OR CHORUS

This final section comprises the largest number of works, having eight entries. These compositions are: *The Shepherds Song* (1972); *I saw an angel* (1974); *Daniel in the Lions' Den* (1974); *To Troubled Friends* (1974); *Alleluia, Acclamation and Carol* (1975); *Witching Hour* (1975); *Going and Staying* (1975); *Four Elegies* (1979). The *Alleluia, Acclamation and Carol* is a three movement work that has each movement published separately. *Four Elegies* is yet to be released in print.

The *Shepherds Song* is a Christmas Carol that features a soprano soloist. There are three verses to this hymn with each using a variation of the same musical material. Each verse consists of a section for chorus and one for the soloist who sings alone and unaccompanied. The choral parts are written in hymn fashion on two staves and their music is made of plainly simple chords which continue to pull toward the resolution of a G-major chord.

The text is written in old English and tells the story of the angel's proclaiming

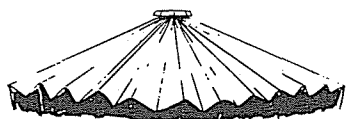
Christ's birth. The material for the soprano soloist is not particularly difficult, but has an enchantment that complements the choral and tape music profiling a warm gentleness. There is very little dynamic change until the end and the tempo remains constant throughout all verses.

Pinkham describes the tape as being a mirror to the atmosphere of the text. It has pastoral sounds and tiny silvery bells which are heard above a drone of a shepherd's pipe. The tape is played separately before each of the verses and then joins the chorus and soloist in a joyous celebration at the end of the third verse. The G is a consistent pulsation which aids in the tonality.

I saw an angel is more experimental than many of the others mentioned above in that it basically consists of unstemmed quarter notes so that the singers know their pitch, but the rhythmic duration is determined by the individual singer. Vertical bar lines identify 5 second intervals in which each collection of pitches must be performed; these pitches are sustained throughout so that a continuous sound is produced.

There are four SATB solo voices (or semi-chorus), but their music is written with traditional notation. Their material is on the final two pages of the score.

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and is not written so the chorus can see the simultaneous events with their score. Cues for the soloists are based on exact timings with the first page having each soloist enter and sing primarily the same thematic material individually. They then join in a unison single recitative-like area. Eventually they move into a four-part homophonic section that dissolves into a closing unison alleluia. The alleluia is repeated until a signal is given by the conductor to end.

The tape consists of the note A at

various pitch levels and timbres with some busy bird-like sounds in the background. The melody for the soloists is clearly intensified on the tape and then recurs in different patterns.

Although written for junior high school singers, this work would be better suited to a more advanced group. Some high school choirs might find this taxing unless they have encountered experimental music prior to the introduction of this piece. It is, nevertheless, one of Pinkham's easier choral/tape pieces and only has a duration of four minutes.

Daniel in the Lions' Den is one of his

most exciting tape pieces and requires a large complement of forces which include tenor, baritone and bass-baritone soli, mixed chorus, narrator, 2 pianos, percussion ensemble of 4 players and tape. The narrator has a large amount of material which is interspersed among the choral and solo areas. His text is provided with no rhythmic or pitch indication for the words, and all interpretation is left to the reader. The soloists represent Daniel, The Angel and Habakkuk with Daniel (baritone) having the most extensive material. All soloists need to be solid, advanced singers, but only Daniel sings with the tape as the accompaniment.

The chorus will greatly enjoy this work and they have a variety of musical activities which include growling, shouting a glissando, singing a canon and having loud and, at times, very dramatic choral parts. Their music is often in two parts but there are divisi areas. The music for the two pianists is very difficult with busy, brilliant, running passages that require accomplished performers. Many of the choral parts are doubled by the second piano.

The percussion includes timpani, glockenspiel, triangle, wood block, tambourine, suspended cymbal, crash cymbals, tam tam, snare drum, three tomtoms and bass drum. They have a very active part which adds considerable color to the work; their parts are frequently quite active. The instrumental parts are not included in the choral score, but are available on rental.

The tape has segments which are separated by blank tape. There are very animated sounds that are somewhat chaotic with layers of textures. The echo sounds in segment two which accompanies Daniel's Prayer for Deliverance are very mysterious. The pitch (A) comes from a low sound and the slow tempo timbres produce a haunting effect. Segment three imitates the growling of the lions with low and medium-low sounds. There is an Eastern flavor with an effect of a sitar player in the melodic and rhythmic material of the fourth segment. The final segment is very busy with an accelerated rush to silence.

This work was conceived as a theater piece and Pinkham suggests the possibility of a variety of multi-media productions such as: staging, in the manner of opera, choreography, as in ballet, a lone dancer or mime, or with the introduction of lights, slides, projections or other visual effects. The work has a duration of about 24 minutes and is one that will be well received by performers and audience. It is highly recommended to college groups.

To Troubled Friends is for SATB chorus, string orchestra and tape. This 35-page work has four movements, but

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the tape is only used in two and four. The choral score has a piano reduction of the string parts with the four-part chorus placed on two staves.

The James Wright texts are "To a Troubled Friend," "Father," "A Fit Against The Country" and "Evening." The choral music is very dissonant throughout all four movements with some unison and two-part areas. Except for brief moments of tone clusters, falsetto phrases and *sprechstimme*, the notation follows a traditional format.

This is a very complex work that is designed for an advanced choir and orchestra. The texts and music evoke a contemplative and somewhat melancholy mood. There are a few areas for the orchestra alone, but its function is more as an accompaniment for the chorus. The striking dissonant vocal lines are difficult. They make this work less accessible or attractive to many groups.

The first 15 seconds of the tape has bells which change into whirring and whistling sounds. Rising and falling scale passages of fast vibratos and a sixteenth-note rhythmic pattern on the same pitch patterns dominate the middle area. Sporadic electronic sounds are rapidly repeated on the same pitch with various other sound types in the final section.

This work is, possibly, one of Pinkham's most sophisticated pieces for chorus and tape. It will appeal to those directors seeking an esoteric style and true contemporary music challenge.

Alleluia, Acclamation and Carol, An Easter Set, also commissioned by this writer for Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana, uses a mixed chorus, three or more antiphonal solo women's voices, a solo soprano, solo timpani, optional percussion and tape. The three movements are diverse in character with the second, *Acclamation*, for timpani solo and tape. The solo is moderately difficult and the performer should have 3 timpani.

Alleluia is the longest movement using only the one word title for the entire text. This word receives a variety of treatments such as extended tone clusters which are spoken or sung, low register tone production, indeterminate pitch, and a highly effective antiphonal area for the soloists. These antiphonal singers are placed in various parts of the hall and they each maintain an independence of mood and tempo. They cue each other and their effect is that of ethereal angels as the sounds float over the audience and blend in with the tape and choral sounds. Their music is not long or particularly difficult but they must have an autonomy because of their wide separations from each other and the chorus. They begin on different pitches which requires careful listening for them.

The third movement, *Carol*, is subtitled, *Now is the hour of darkness past*, and consists of three verses with repeated refrains. The music is easy and somewhat plain in contrast to the first movement. It is well within the ability of almost any high school or church choir and could serve as an anthem for an Easter service. The optional percussion parts used in this movement require triangle, suspended cymbal, small non-pitched drum and timpani.

The choral parts for this *Easter Set* are easy, but a large chorus is recom-

mended because of the divisi chords and dramatic effect of the music. The soprano soloist has many coloratura type passages and should be an advanced singer. She has a full vocal range that extends up to high C.

The tape has rapid fire sounds which have rhythmic pulsations in the first movement. There are some busy random notes which are heard later. The second movement has the effect of a whirring motor with additional high pitches in the background. The third movement sounds are very rhythmic with a fast ostinato

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PINKHAM . . .

type of pattern. It is easy for the chorus to find their starting pitches from the tape.

Witching Hour is for women's voices, electric guitar and tape, and has a duration of less than four minutes. The chorus is predominantly in unison with some divisi areas that range from 2-4 parts. The chorus has one unpitched sound on the word "whisht."

The music for the guitar is written as a melodic line on one staff, but, just as there are places where the chorus divides into a chord, some strummed chords are found in the guitar score. Pinkham indicates that the sound should continue and not be dampened, which gives an effect similar to that of a pedal on a piano. There are several moderately difficult passages for the guitarist and this music is often in the form of running eighth note passages.

The tape which accompanies the performers is continuous and non-synchronized. It begins 30 seconds before the guitar enters and may be described as having rather fiendish sounds which reflect the mood of the text.

Going and Staying is a companion piece for *Witching Hour* and also uses women's voices and electric guitar; however, offstage bells have been added. They may be performed by glockenspiel, celesta or handbells.

Although there is more divisi work for the chorus, this setting is easier for them than *Witching Hour*. There is less thematic material with some phrases re-

peated. The bell passages are usually interludes; they are descending eighth-note motives which are repetitive. The guitar is less busy in this piece than in the first one, which most of its music as arpeggio fragments or chords.

The tempo frequently shifts in this work which may have some performance difficulties. The tape has stop-start interludes similar to those in *The Sheepheards Song*. The mood created by the performers and tape is one of quiet reflection, and this tranquil setting makes a memorable impression on the listener.

The score and tape for a recent work, *Four Elegies*, was unavailable for review. It is in press and will be published shortly. According to Pinkham, the tape plays only in the interludes and the four elegies themselves can be excerpted and performed with piano reduction. One other work, *Temptations in the Wilderness*, has been withdrawn by the composer. There is a 3 minute comic opera called *Garden Party* which employs an SATB chorus and electronic tape, but this work is outside the intent of this article.

In closing it should be noted that Daniel Pinkham's music for chorus and tape has considerable variety. The music was conceived for choirs ranging from junior high to advanced college students. As with his non-tape music, these works have many levels of difficulty with most being accessible. They are genuinely attractive and plethoric with regard to their creative inventiveness.

Conductors who have never performed music for tape and chorus would find the

works *In the beginning of creation* or *Evergreen* as suitable introductory pieces. More advanced groups will find *The Call of Isaiah* or *Daniel in the Lions' Den* of interest. Whatever the taste or situation, Pinkham has supplied the musicians with an appropriate work. We have been bombarded by electronic sounds in movies and television for many years. As comprehensive musicians we should have a curiosity and responsibility to bring this genre of music to our choirs and audiences.

FOOTNOTES

1. Taken from a letter from Daniel Pinkham to James McCray, January 2, 1979.

2. See J. McCray, "Pinkham: On Composing" in the October, 1976 issue of *The Choral Journal* (pp. 15-17) for an interview discussion about his composition procedures.

DANIEL PINKHAM'S AVAILABLE MUSIC FOR CHORUS AND ELECTRONIC TAPE

1970 — *In the Beginning of Creation* (Biblical), (Mixed chorus and tape), 4 min., ECS 2902.

1971 — *Seven Last Words of Christ on the Cross* (Biblical), (Mixed chorus, T, B-bar and B soli, organ and tape), 12 min., ECS 2907.

1971 — *The Call of Isaiah* (Biblical), (Mixed chorus, or SA or TB, organ, optional percussion and tape), 5 min., ECS 2911.

1972 — *The Shepherded Song: A Caroll or Himme* (Helicon), (Mixed chorus, S solo and optional tape), 8 min., ECS 2913.

1974 — *Two Poems of Howard Holtzman* (Holtzman), (Women's chorus and tape), 5 min., ECS 2835.

1974 — *The Lament of David* (Biblical), (Mixed chorus and tape), 8 min., ECS 2939.

1974 — *To Troubled Friends* (James Wright), (Mixed chorus, strings and tape), 17 min., ECS 2942.

1974 — *Daniel in the Lions' Den* (Biblical and other source), (Mixed chorus, narrator, T, B, and Bar soli, 2 pianos, timpani and 3 percussion and tape), 24 min., ECS 2946.

1974 — *O Depth of Wealth* (Biblical), (Mixed chorus, organ and tape), 5 min., ECS 2951.

1974 — *Evergreen* (Robert Hillyer), (Unison chorus, flexible instrumentation and optional tape), 3 min., ECS 2962.

1974 — *I Saw an Angel* (Biblical), (Mixed chorus, SATB soli or semi-chorus and tape), 5 min., ECS 2973.

1975 — *Witching Hour* (Norma Farber), (Women's chorus, electric guitar and tape), 3 min., ECS 2836.

1975 — *Going and Staying* (Norma Farber), (Women's chorus, electric guitar, off-stage bells and tape), 3 min., ECS 2837.

1975 — *Alleluia, Acclamation and Carol* (Isaac Watts), (Mixed chorus, S solo, multiple solo sopranos from the chorus, timpani, percussion and tape), 8 min., ECS 2954 2955.

1975 — *Amens* (English), (Mixed chorus and tape), 3 min., ECS 3016.

1979 — *Four Elegies* (various 17th-century English poets), (Mixed chorus, T solo, small orchestra and tape), 24 min., ECS 3024.

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