

Javier Busto

Bi-Vocational Journeyman, Medical Doctor, and Self-Taught Musician

John Ratledge

Born on November 13, 1949, in Hondarribia, Spain, Busto was a family physician until his recent retirement. He is an award-winning composer; maintains an active career as a conductor in Europe, Asia, and Australia; and is the founder of Aqua Landa, a choral group of sixteen women. Busto has composed a total of 419 compositions—233 for mixed voices and 186 for equal voices (mostly women's choir). According to Busto, he has written over 500 compositions in total if he includes short songs for children, folk songs, and various other incidental compositions. His compositions are published in Germany, Sweden, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Spain.¹ Busto has been married to Maria Luisa Vega for thirty-eight years, and together they have two children. The couple created Bustovega, their family-owned publishing company, in 1999. He has lived in Hondarribia his entire life except the years he received his medical training.

I first met Javier Busto in 1999 while touring with the Shorter College Chorale in Spain and France. Busto served as clinician when we performed in Zaragoza,

Spain. On that occasion, he conducted three of his compositions, *Ave Maria*, *Ave Maris Stella*, and *Ave Verum Corpus*, at a concert at *Iglesia Santiago el Mayor* on May 15, 1999. Unfortunately, fewer and fewer of Busto's works have been programmed in recent years, and there are many choral directors who may not be familiar with his work. The present article provides a synopsis of an extended interview with Javier Busto that took place on Monday, May 29, 2012, at the Castillo de Carlos V in Hondarribia, Spain, a peaceful and historic location where Busto often played with his many childhood friends as a young boy.

Maria Guerrero (a native Spaniard with a PhD in Romantic Languages and Literature from the University of Florida) served as translator for the three-hour interview. Although Busto speaks Spanish, French, and Basque (and some English at that time) and the interviewer possesses reading proficiency in French, neither was comfortable conducting a three-hour interview in any of these languages. The interview questions and Busto's responses have been edited and reorganized to appear in this article with the assistance of Marvin Latimer.²

John Ratledge
Director of Choral Activities
University of Alabama
john.ratledge@gmail.com

Marvin Latimer
Music Education Department Head
Assistant Director of the School of Music
University of Alabama
mlatimer@music.ua.edu



Childhood and Schooling

Ratledge: What would you like to tell us about your childhood and schooling?

Busto: I was born on the main street, just down from here, near the mayor's house, very close to the town hall. I lived with my father, my mother, three sisters, and one brother. I attended the University of Valladolid, located a short distance north of Madrid. At that time (during Franco's dictatorship) there were no universities in the Basque Country, so our options were either Zaragoza or Valladolid. I studied for six years in the university and two years in the hospital. I met my wife in the university choir. She sang alto and I sang tenor. She was a chemistry major.

Ratledge: And there was chemistry?

Busto: Yes, yes (chuckling).

Ratledge: Did you have music in your home?

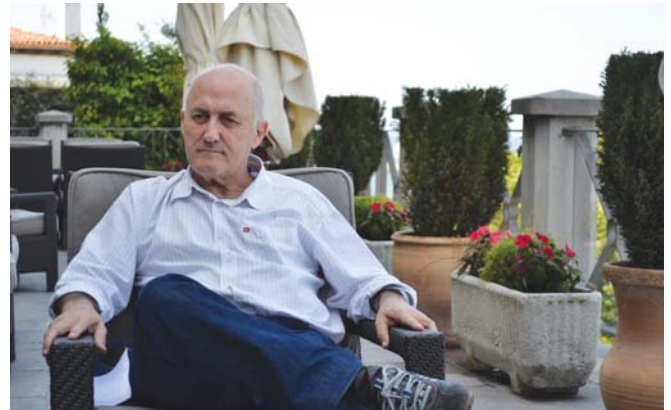
Busto: Yes. In my home there was always music. My father was a musician. My uncles were musicians on both sides of the family. All of them lived here in this small neighborhood. Because this is such a small town, we really didn't have much to do other than singing and playing music. Everything in my musical life revolved around what happened here in Hondarribia. When I was eighteen years old, I created the first rock band here called the Troublemakers. It was really what I wanted from my musical life. The important thing to say is that I have never studied music: neither solfeggio, nor harmony, nor counterpoint, absolutely nothing!

Philosophy of Medicine

Ratledge: What is your area of specialization in medicine?

Busto: I am a family doctor.

Ratledge: Do you think a relationship between the medi-



Javier Busto at Castillo de Carlos V in Hondarribia, Spain.

cal and music professions exists?

Busto: I personally would not restrict this relationship to medicine and music. I believe that it should be expanded to medicine and the arts in general. There are many examples of prominent figures that work in both the sciences and the arts. For example, there were students in my class who were exceptional writers, thinkers, and painters. Some chose to go into the arts rather than medicine. I think that the relationship between music and the arts is, for me, so clear, because medicine creates much tension inside of the individual. One must look for something to calm the spirit or something that makes the mind relax.

Ratledge: Has dealing daily with both suffering and healing affected you as a musician?

Busto: What you ask of me is actually the other way around. When I began studying medicine, I thought of it more as simply a vocation; music was more important to me. But as I have come to know more about people and about their sufferings, I have realized that I am called to this profession. We live in such a complicated time. When one relates to people every day and experiences their challenges—people who say that they have no money to buy medicine or people with a very low quality of life—I must weigh how I possibly could prefer music to medicine. I have very good relationships with choirs, but it is not as close as when I treat my patients.

Ratledge: Would you characterize your relationship with

Medical Doctor, and Self-Taught Musician

your patients as a healer or as a facilitator?

Busto: At the beginning of my career, I relied on medication because it was what I was taught to do. But as time has gone by, I have realized that I don't have to rely so much on medication. I have begun to talk more to my patients in an attempt to help them understand that much of what happens to them is in their minds. I suppose you could say I have been working more and more on healing the mind.

Ratledge: That's interesting because it appears your philosophy has changed as you have aged, not only as a doctor, but also as a human being.

Busto: As time goes by, one learns how to deal with illnesses by trying to understand the person to help them

heal themselves by healing their minds. Because after all, in many cases, when one makes a good diagnosis, one sees that there is no infirmity at all. Of course, there are also people who are very sick, some with cancer or other very real infirmities.

Ratledge: I assume that you have lost patients. Has dealing with death informed how you might set a work?

Busto: I think I'm a little special in this sense because I have had a relationship with death since I was very young. My grandfather, my father's father, died in 1956 when I was seven years old. I remember it vividly. My father was a deeply religious man. He always encouraged me to have a close relationship with the dead. When my grandfather died, my father made me go up to the coffin to see him. My father said, "Look at your grandpa. See him. Feel how

Summer Choral Composers Forum

June 19 - 26, 2016

Steven Sametz, director

co-sponsored by *Lehigh University Choral Arts*
and the *American Choral Directors Association*
The Princeton Singers, choir-in-residence

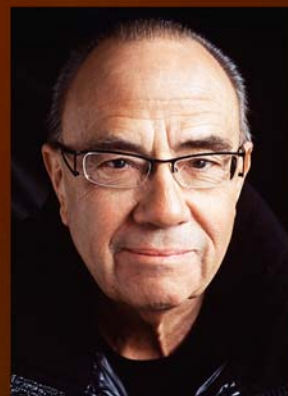
Lehigh University • Zoellner Arts Center • Bethlehem, PA 18015



ACDA Brock Commission Composer
Steven Sametz

Composers are encouraged to apply to this week-long practicum, workshopping new pieces with mentor-composers Sven-David Sandström and Steven Sametz in a supportive atmosphere.

*For more information go to
www.lehighchoralarts.com/composersforum
Discount applies for early registration*



Internationally acclaimed composer
Sven-David Sandström

Javier Busta Bi-Vocational Journeyman,

cold he is. Touch him!” My father taught me that death is a beautiful, transitory moment, one that is not unpleasant and doesn’t require anguish. It is just a moment in life. Nothing else. I don’t react coldly to death. I believe that death is only one moment. We must carry on in spite of death but without the great drama. Death should not create anguish.

Musical Influences and Composition Techniques

Ratledge: Do you have a favorite composer?

Busto: For me, initially, the most important composers were the Beatles: John Lennon and Paul McCartney. One weekend I was in Madrid, conducting a workshop with 110 singers, piano, drums, and double bass. We performed Beatles songs. It was one of the most fantastic moments in my life.

Ratledge: When did you begin to compose music?

Busto: It depends on what you mean. If it is about composing written scores, I started writing scores in the late 1970s. But in earlier times, I wrote many songs, mostly ones that nobody wanted to sing. In those days, they were protesting texts, love songs, and other kinds of music. They were not on paper.

Ratledge: You said earlier that your music instruction was limited. How did you know how to write songs?

Busto: By copying!

Ratledge: What are distinctive characteristics of your compositional style?

Busto: I’d say it’s a mix of Vitoria, Palestrina, Bach, Monteverdi, Schütz, Fauré, and Stravinsky. I believe it is important for you to understand that I’m a self-taught person. I didn’t have an academic background. I always say that all music has already been written for many, many, many years. The only thing one must do is change the order of the pitches. There is no other secret. I write at ran-

dom, and I am influenced by all of the music that I have heard, studied, and performed. So when one achieves change in a particular way and people accept it, they say, “Ah! This one I like!” Why? Because there is a way to write it down. But in my case, it is absolutely random. The music I began to write was a mix of Rock, Bossa Nova, and Samba and was everything I heard. It was what the groups of that time were doing. Those were the primary influences when I began to write choral music.

Ratledge: How did you learn to read music and notate your scores?

Busto: When I started directing the Basque Students Choir, my preparation required a great deal of effort. For example, in the beginning I practiced our pieces with the guitar because I didn’t have a piano, nor did I know how to play the piano. It was very slow work, but it led me to deepen my knowledge of the scores. I learned a process of finding the secrets about how to make my own music. For example, through this work I achieved understanding of the individual voices—the style or quality of the voice, how high and how low, the tessitura of the voices—and their relationship to each other. Because of this, I learned the voice very well. What I don’t know very well is the way to write for instruments. I tried many different ways to find the style that I prefer. When I first began to compose, I listened to a great deal of choral music. By listening to voices, I learned when a voice does not fit at a certain moment or is not appropriate for a certain song. Because of my lack of ability to analyze the scores, when I’m listening to music I realize when something is not good. What, I can’t always say. But I know when something is not right.

Ratledge: As you were speaking, I remembered a story you told me in 1999 about the process of composing *Agnus Dei*.

Busto: This is an interesting story. It was a little bit of a rebellion on my part. In 1985, I presented my *Ave Maria* at the Tolosa Composition. It was discarded because the jury thought it was too Romantic. According to them, my *Ave Maria* was a vulgarity. The jury was only composers, not conductors, and was very modern in its approach. I must say to you with modesty that *Ave Maria*, the same

Medical Doctor, and Self-Taught Musician

one that was discarded at the competition, is one of the most famous pieces in the entire history of choral music in Spain. It is the one that has sold the most copies, over 120,000. For me, *Ave Maria*, is very important, but when I saw that they hated that score, I said to myself, “I’m going to write another style of music that would come out of my head, something that they wouldn’t call bad. So I decided to create a completely different style in the *Agnus Dei*. The actual score became “Busto’s electrocardiogram,” because it was so visually different from my previous music. I began to compose scores in what I called “electrocardiograms of taste” because they were all graphics with lines that went up and down. It was a style of writing that I invented, and they gave me the prize. The next year I won another prize. The other year I didn’t present, and in the next year I came back, presented a piece, and won the prize. After that, I decided not to present my works anymore in a composition competition. So, what I believe is important to the judges at composition competitions is that you make the jury think that you are presenting something ground-breaking or something that will make someone think. It is not so important that you are writing something beautiful.

Ratledge: Do you begin a composition by finding a text first?

Busto: Yes, always. When I’ve tried to do the opposite, when I have started with the music and then go the text, it has been very difficult for me. Very, very, very difficult.

Ratledge: I compiled a list of your combined works in preparation for this interview and discovered that much of your music is sacred. Are you particularly motivated to write religious music?

Busto: I believe the ratio to be about 50/50. You are probably more familiar with the sacred music because that is what is easiest to sell and export. The compositions that are not religious music are mostly written in Basque, and are extremely difficult.

Ratledge: Do you compose at the piano or with the use of computer software?



Maria Guerrero with Busto during the interview.

Busto: I use Finale only for transcribing and editing scores, not for composing. It is fundamentally for publishing. Finale fits very well for me because I write on the piano, and then I can put it into Finale and listen to it. Since I have no ability to play the piano and hear what I’m playing, this is very helpful. I have to go very slowly, and Finale gives me the opportunity to listen to what I’ve written.

Ratledge: Do you compose on a schedule?

Busto: No, because my primary profession has been medicine, and I have enormous good fortune and a good standard of living from being a medical doctor. I write only when I really feel like it, because I don’t have an obligation to write. I spent two years not writing anything. I just didn’t feel like it.

Ratledge: You said that you try to focus on your patients as humans rather than simply following medical protocols. Do you approach composition as a craft, as primarily a structural exercise, or do you attempt to empathize with the text as you compose?

Busto: I believe it’s a very personal thing, writing a score or treating patients, because it involves the same kind of considerations. A person and a text are both influenced by their specific context. A person has a certain set of circumstances that affects his or her life. I empathize as much with the text as with my patients. I have a close relationship with the text.

Javier Busta Bi-Vocational Journeyman,

Ratledge: In some of your music you have written non-textual effects. For example, in *Ave Maris Stella* you incorporate an interesting buzz effect.

Busto: There was a reason for the buzz in the music. I don't use effects simply for pleasure. At the time I composed *Ave Maris Stella*, there was a ship here that was called *Mar Stella*. The name of the ship literally means *Star of the Sea*. It was one of the important boats that we have here, and I identify with the boats and the fishermen who work them. The buzz sound reflected the engines of the boats, nothing else. I am also influenced by other traditions from this area. For example, the fishermen in this area, as they go out to sea, whether they are religious or not, when passing the Guadalupe statue, they make the sign of the cross and pray a Hail Mary. I try to reflect all of those traditions in my music.

Interpretation and Choral Performance Style Preference

Ratledge: When did you begin conducting choirs?

Busto: I shared an apartment at Valladolid, and my roommates were studying to be priests in seminary. Because of the typical tradition of the seminary, they sang. They encouraged me to start singing and get involved with choirs. As one friend of mine said, "In this country, the best way to transmit the theology of the church is through singing. Forget about Saint Peter and that kind of stuff. Just sing well!" When I began to sing in the Basque Student Choir, it was only because these roommates had begged me. At first, I didn't want to sing in the choir. My passion was for playing the guitar at that time. But finally, after their continued insistence, I joined the choir. Because there was nobody to conduct, I conducted. People told me

San Juan Argentina
11-16 August 2016.

San Juan canta
Concurso y Festival Internacional de Coros

www.sanjuancanta.com.ar sanjuancanta@gmail.com

GOBIERNO DE SAN JUAN
MINISTERIO DE TURISMO Y CULTURA

Fundación Banco San Juan

CORO DE CÁMARA ARTURO BÉRUTI

Workshops, festival concerts with national and international choirs, renowned international Jury, 3 different competition categories
Talleres, conciertos del festival con coros nacionales y del exterior, Jurado internacional de gran renombre, tres categorías para el concurso.

Additional touristic activities can be organized upon request.
Actividades turísticas pueden organizarse adicionalmente

The joy of singing already shines at San Juan Canta
La alegría de cantar ya está sonando en San Juan Canta

Welcome! Bienvenidos!

JURY

Lourdes Sanchez

Naomi Farran

Aida Swenson

Javier Busto

TJ Harper Jury President

Medical Doctor, and Self-Taught Musician

that I could conduct because I had good ears and played the guitar. So, I did it more than anything to help out.

Ratledge: What can you tell us about conducting and interpreting your own music?

Busto: When I interpret Busto, I am the one who is interpreting Busto, but I am not Busto. When I interpret my own music, I do it as someone else, not as the composer. That gives me distance enough to be able to identify and correct problems.

Ratledge: So in a way when you are in front of the choir you are still composing?

Busto: Yes. I also get feedback from my choir.

Ratledge: When you write a piece of music, do you ever think about the potential emotional impact that it will have on the listener and on the singer?

Busto: Yes. I always write with that objective in mind, to move singers, conductors, and the audience as well. I always try to emote, for I believe it's the most important thing. I don't particularly like mathematical compositions that are too structured, those that are not going to move me or say anything to me. I work to compose things that possess emotion. I know that I get it sometimes, and at other times, I don't. But my goal is to move people—to move myself, to move the singers, to move the conductor who is going to interpret the piece, and to move the audience. I believe this is my life. As I said, I don't get this all of the time.

Ratledge: Do you have any misgivings about giving a composition to a conductor and letting them interpret the music in their own way?

Busto: No, I love it. It's a pleasure for me.

Ratledge: Has there ever been a time when you did not like the interpretation of your pieces?

Busto: At the beginning of my career, I spoke very directly to anyone who asked my opinion. The results



Maria Guerrero, Javier Busto, and John Ratledge

were usually bad. I made a lot of enemies because of my sincerity. Now, I try to be more careful when I say what I think. It is very important if I have an opinion, and I give it to someone, that I know they can accept it and correct themselves.

Ratledge: I've listened to recordings of your choirs, and you don't use vibrato at all with your choir. Why is that?

Busto: I don't like vibrato. I like the tone clean, white, and with no vibrato in the voices. That's because I always think about the idea of a young choir's sound. I worked for some years for a folksong festival here in Hondarribia, and they had a women's choir as part of the festival. Many of the performers were older singers, and one of the things I forbade them to do from the very first was to use that unbearable vibrato.

Ratledge: I observed when you were conducting the *Ave Maria* with my choir in 1999 in Zaragoza, you asked my singers several times not to be so dramatic, just to sing. With that, you asked for no vibrato. This was difficult because they were trained singers with large, mature voices.

Busto: I have known several choirs in the past that sang with vibrato that I liked, but not many. I recall, for instance, the Dale Warland Singers. It is a wonderful choir in which vibrato is a magical thing. It is there, but it's not there. It is a fair use of vibrato.

Thoughts about Religion

Ratledge: How have your personal beliefs about religion influenced you as a person and as a musician?³

Busto: When I was eleven or twelve years old, I went to Lecaroz, a boarding school in Valle del Batzán, for two years. I sang soprano in the church choir near the school. I had a very negative experience as a choirboy. I vividly remember that one Sunday, I was supposed to sing a solo. I told the priest that I couldn't sing because I had a really bad cough and had been sick. But he insisted, and I sang badly. He became extremely angry with me and slapped my face and insulted me. Then for one entire month, while the others were practicing around the piano, he put me in a corner at the back of the room and made me stare at the wall. The priest told me that I wasn't supposed to ever sing in a choir again for my entire life. I swore that I would never sing again. Finished [gestures a cut throat]! And I can remember the song. [Sings] "Stay with me Jesus. The night is coming, and the shadows are rising, my God..." Here, at the high pitch [makes a sign showing the voice breaking], my voice broke.

Ratledge: Did that experience affect your music, your spirituality, or your connection with the church?

Busto: When I began to compose music, I asked myself, "How should I give the pain back to the priests after what they had done to me?" They slapped me, gave me punishments, but offered little in the way of a religious foundation. If one perceives everything to be negative, one's attitude about life is going to be negative. One judges that everything is bad. At that time, my personal question was about retribution. How should I behave with them? Should I be negative or show them that I valued their teachings in spite of their behavior? Should I keep help-



Javier Busto and John Ratledge during the interview.

ing with the masses and learn every Mass, every Credo, everything we sang in Latin, understanding that all those things are cultural and not necessarily related to a system of beliefs? I decided that it is my culture, and I don't intend to devalue it. So, I kept this deep sense of belief in prayer. These things were not destroyed inside of me. I have learned to appreciate all the knowledge that was given to me from them, all the religious music, religious culture, Latin, and everything else. Therefore, I decided to write a kind of music that reflects all the knowledge that I received from those people. That is why my music is so religious, so sentimental, so much having to do with prayer.

Ratledge: Do you believe that one's faith or lack of faith influences the writing of a sacred choral composition in any way?

Busto: All of my religious music has to do with my background. The Basque Country's folklore tradition is potent. It is even stronger in choral music. One can find a mixture of folklore and religion in all of my music. My religious music is influenced more by the folklore of the region than it is by the religious content of the text. That doesn't mean that I don't respect religious music. When I decide to write religious music, I do so with tremendous respect. Even though I don't have beliefs, I have respect. There is something very important that happens to me when I compose religious music.

Medical Doctor, and Self-Taught Musician

Publishing and Commissions

Ratledge: When did you start Bustovega, your publishing company?

Busto: It was maybe 1999 or 2000. It was because I became upset with the way the publishing company was handling the publication of my music. That is when I decided to create my own publishing house. We publish only my music. We don't have a distributor. There doesn't seem to be anyone in the United States who is that interested in distributing my music. If there was one company that contacted me and said that they were interested in distributing my music, that would be fine. But I am not going to make the effort to look for a distributor.

Ratledge: Do you accept commissions?

Busto: Yes. I recently received a commission from a choir in the United States. It is an interaction between the conductor and me. I propose the conditions. I say, "What type of work do you want? What kind of text do you want? A text in English, Latin, or Spanish?" I go through this process, question by question, and at the end I have my plan.

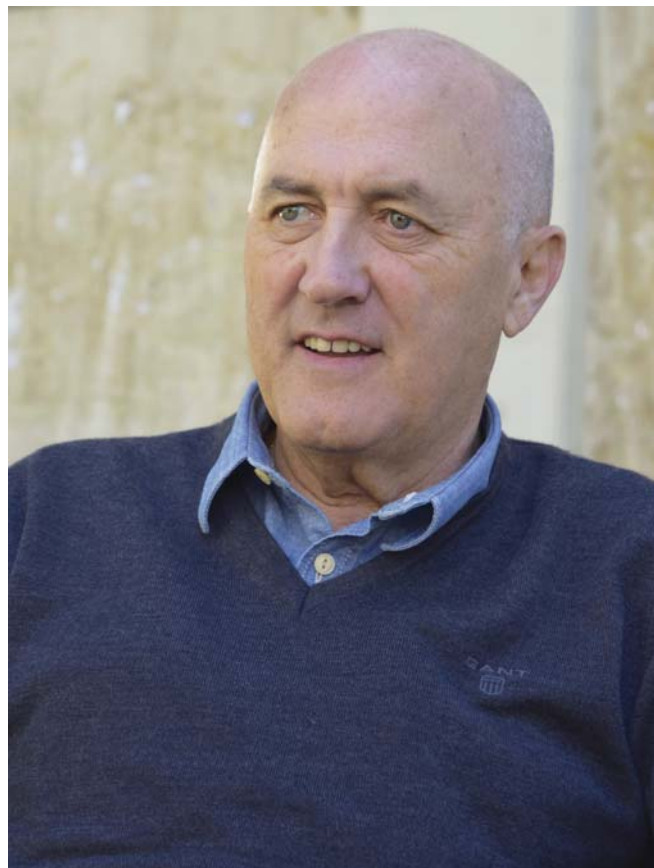
Ratledge: Does it ever occur that someone commissions you to set a text and you don't like it at all?

Busto: Yes, yes, several times. When they do, I say no, absolutely. If the text does not interest me, I won't write it. Most of the time, I search for texts with interesting phonetics. For me, the meaning of the text is important, but most important are the phonetics of the poem.... how the text sounds.

Advice for Young Composers

Ratledge: Do you have any advice for young composers?

Busto: I have advice to give, but I cannot provide technical advice because I lack the resources to give specific musical instruction; however, I can give advice for people to support and uplift them or encourage them to pursue



Javier Busto in 2015

their goals in life for those who would be able to go far in the world of music. For example, young Basque composers who are well known in Spain ask me for advice concerning the music they are composing. Young composers send me their music and ask my opinion. What I really try to do is to uplift them in order for them to express their emotions, because all of them went to the Conservatory. I have found that everybody who went to the Conservatory must separate themselves from what they learned there and be carried away by their emotions. Because, if they have not a little bit of consciousness and are not, at the end, a little bit freer, they will write the same way as their professors. They will not find their own style.

Conclusion

Though Busto has not actively sought recognition

Javier Busto Bi-Vocational Journeyman,

through composition competitions in recent years, his early submissions won prizes in notable competitions in Bilbao, Igulada, and Tolosa. For a period of time beginning in the mid-nineties, several of his works—*Ave Maria*, *Ave Maris Stella*, *Ave Verum Corpus*, and *Agnus Dei*—were programmed by leading choral organizations in the United States with some regularity. For example, *Ave Maria* was one of the featured works on *Spotless Rose, Hymns to the Virgin Mary*, a 2008 Grammy Award-winning album by the Phoenix Chorale, conducted by Charles Bruffy. Still, though Busto continues to be productive, one rarely hears his music performed in the United States or sees his works listed on conference reading sessions.

Busto's choral ensembles have distinguished themselves at such choral competitions as the Ejea de los Caballeros and Tolosa Competitions in the Basque Country, Avilés and Florilège vocal de Tours in France, Gorizia in Italy, Spittal an der Dräu in Austria, and Mainhausen and Marktoberdorf in Germany. He maintains an active career as guest conductor, clinician, and adjudicator throughout Europe, Asia, Australia, and Canada. However, by his own admission, his presence in the United States as a conductor and clinician has been limited.

This brief snapshot into Busto's career suggests, perhaps, that more research is needed that could stimulate awareness of the work of such international choral musicians as Javier Busto.⁴ Within the present context, for example, future investigations that would further document the Basque Country choral tradition that has become so integral to Busto's musical vocabulary appear to be warranted.

Finally, this report would be incomplete without a brief characterization of Busto as a person. During my conversations with him, his level of energy seemed palpable, warm, and stimulating. Although not a tall man, he presented himself with self-confidence, assurance, and an imposing authenticity. He demonstrated an inquisitive, attentive spirit and an almost childlike sense of humor that belied the intellect that has allowed him to experience such success as a physician and such breadth as an artist.

Madeleine L'Engle wrote in *Walking on Water, Reflections On Faith and Art*, "Provided an individual is an artist of integrity, he is a genuine servant of the glory which

he does not recognize, and unknown to himself, there is 'something divine' about his work."⁵ In my experience, much of Busto's music can aptly be characterized as something divine. Hopefully the insights gained through this interview and perhaps future discoveries it might encourage will serve to foster a better understanding of Javier Busto as a composer, physician, and human being.

NOTES

- ¹ Germany (Ferrimontana and Carus Verlag), Sweden (Gehrmans Musikförlag), the United States (Alliance, Santa Barbara, and Walton Music Publishers), the United Kingdom (Oxford University Press), and in Spain (Bustovega).
- ² The complete transcripts, both in their original and translated form, have been donated, along with a copy of the video, to the American Choral Directors Association International Archives for Choral Music and are available upon request.
- ³ The discussion of religion was lengthy and went into considerable detail, not only concerning theological ramifications of a nonbeliever writing music utilizing sacred texts, but discussions of medical considerations concerning biblical narrative (virgin births, death/resurrection, etc.), to interpretation of that which is acknowledged and respected but not necessarily felt or believed in making exceptional art. The conversation about religion was a continuation of our previous discussion that occurred in Zaragoza, Spain, in 1999.
- ⁴ See David D. Wells, "An Introduction to the Life and Music of Javier Busto and a Conductor's Analysis of Missa Pro Defunctus" (Doctoral Dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1997). Also see Elena González Correcher, *La Mirada Azul* (El Ejido, Spain: Círculo Rojo, 2014), a recent authorized biography of Javier Busto.
- ⁵ Madeleine L'Engle, *Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art* (Wheaton, IL: Crosswicks, Harold Shaw Publishers, 1980), 30.

When asked to name ten of his favorite compositions, Busto listed the following works (all SATB, divisi unless noted):

Ave Maris Stella, soprano solo, SATB - “The music opens like a river to the sea—gradually. ‘Hail Star of the Sea.’ The opening recital of the soprano should sound as if from afar, and the choir answers, expressing the loneliness of the sailors as they set out to sea.”

Ave Maria - “*Ave Maria* is very important in my development as a composer. This work must be sung like a prayer...serenely. Many choirs sing *forte* on the text, *Sancta Maria*, and this is not my idea. This part of the composition should show a strong internal form of interpretation but not dramatism.”

O magnum mysterium - “*O magnum mysterium* tells about the mystery of Christ’s birth. The first bars are pianissimo parlato to try to express the surprise of the people from Bethlehem when they discovered He was the Son of a virgin mother. That is why each person must sing piano and with his or her own tempo as if they were talking in the street.”

Sagastipean - “I created different atmospheres in this piece. The introduction reflects a man lying on his back looking at the sky, and he calmly falls asleep. He begins to dream, and the dream becomes a dance. The second verse suddenly feels like the medlar’s stones are five, the same as the five sorrows of his heart. He quickly realizes that he shouldn’t feel this way, and he begins to sing a joyful song. The last section contains a lovely melody that lures him into a deep sleep, and at this moment, the words of the song are nonsense lyrics.”

Zai itxoiten, SSAA - “*Gauaren Zergatiaren Bila* is one of my compositions that is written in the Basque language. It is a set of four songs, one of which is *Zai itxoiten*. The text is from Edurne Martínez Juanaberria. She was fourteen years old when she won a poetry award. I was touched by her words and the fact that a teenager could write this desperate poetry.”

Christus factus est, TTBB - “This text was used to reflect a basic Christian concept of Christ’s death: ‘It was made for us, suffering by giving his own life.’ The music, from the melodic point of view, could be defined as descriptive, in parallel relationship to the words. I tried to imitate the Easter processions held in Spain, with second tenors, baritones, and bass imitating the beating of drums. First tenors imitate bugles.”

Agnus Dei from Missa brevis pro pace - “In 1986 there was such a scream of fury and impotence in the face of the death while everyone mostly desired lasting peace. The general feeling of the score represents the permanent fight between good and evil, the divine and the human: the women represent an eternal idea of ‘heaven’ and the men are in a permanent fight against all that sounds spiritual, fraternal, and about love.”

Esta tierra - “This work was written for my brother-in-law’s choir in the city of Valladolid, where I lived for several years. The poem describes the landscape of Castile, the Spanish region where Valladolid is located. The landscape of the city is varied but is mostly plain. This is exactly what describes my music in this song.”

Salve Regina, SSAA - “The melody is written alternating the meter from 3/8 to 5/8 and was done so to get away from the classical idea of a ‘very balanced’ and controlled prayer of a virgin in 4/4. The work has two important moments: the phrase *misericordes oculos* in the final chord of m.49 reflects the mercy of the Virgin. The second moment is the ending repetition of the word *Maria*, which reflects the simplicity of the Virgin.”

Ave verum corpus - “I wrote this work in memory of my mother, Maritxu Sagrado. The main melody is in the soprano voice, representing the strength of my mother in a slightly high tessitura that can be solved with effort. This is a reference to my concept of her: a seemingly hard and difficult woman but one who possessed a great heart.”