

Hands
SATB, 2 soloists, a cappella
JH - C034

Jocelyn Hagen

pdf - \$1.75
printed - \$3.00

Hands

SATB choir, 2 soloists, a cappella

jocelyn hagen

About “Hands”

In 2016 I was honored to receive a commission from the International Federation of Choral Music for a performance at the World Choral Symposium in Barcelona in July of 2017. The theme for the symposium was “The Colors of Peace,” and I was tasked with creating a new work based that theme, to be sung by the Vocal Art Ensemble of Sweden (Jan Yngwe, conductor).

It was an incredibly exciting commission, but I must admit that I was stuck right at the gate. The first thing I do when beginning a new piece of vocal music is pick a text. But what text could I choose that would represent all the musicians attending the conference? Most of the attendees would be speaking English, but for some reason choosing a text in English didn’t feel right to me. It felt too limited.

I was pondering this while in Chicago attending a different conference. I spent an evening with a dear friend strolling through the crowded streets. We don’t see each other often and were so happy to be spending time together that we were happily walking the street holding hands. Then it dawned on me! *This* is what the piece needs to be about: a simple gesture, the act of uniting, coming together.

It is no surprise that this idea struck me very deeply in this moment. The United States is in deep turmoil right now and feels more divided than ever. There is heavy judgement on both sides, leaving very little room to be stuck in the middle. Because of this, our nation has not been peaceful as of late. I do not pretend to know the solution to this problem, but I do feel that there should be less talking and accusing, and more listening. The act of unity is the foundation for peace, and it’s the reason I chose to create “Hands” in this way.

“Hands” is a vocalise, a song without words. I started the writing process just by singing to myself. My mother told me that, as a child, she could always tell when I was happy because I was singing. I wanted this melody to have the same kind of spontaneous joy.

Because I want the vowels to feel natural in every language, each performing ensemble may choose which vowels to sing. When I composed the opening melody, the vowel that came naturally to me was a shallow version of an “uh” vowel, like the word “cut,” but with a more “pop” color. When the Vocal Art Ensemble of Sweden sang it, the conductor chose a pure “ah.” I love both versions, as well as the opportunity for wider diversity.

The movement instructions for “Hands” are printed in the score, and these simple movements have a profound effect on the audience. At the beginning, a soloist stands in front, singing completely alone. It is impossible not to watch this brave soul, beginning a piece, starting a movement, on their own. That soloist is later joined by a second voice, stepping forward and away from the choir. The same melody is sung, except now it’s joined in beautiful counterpoint as a duet. Then, gradually, other voices join in, expanding upon the melody and moving forward into an abstract mixed formation. Twenty-five measures into the piece the movement becomes static, and all choir members are singing a new melody, facing confidently outward. They are a group, united. They fill the space with bigger, more colorful chords, extending their range, and climaxing with soaring high notes for the sopranos. The loud chord rings, the original melody begins again, and the singers change formation. This time they head to the front of the stage, close to the audience, and one by one they begin joining hands with each other. They have found their common ground. They are all harmonizing this one melody. They are standing strong together.

~ Jocelyn Hagen (September 2017)

22

Do not photocopy.
For perusal only.

soloists join chorus

tutti mf

tutti mf

a few more

a few basses mp

tutti mf

tutti mf

**chorus stops moving, settling into a mixed formation abstractly placed upon the stage*

jocelyn hagen

27

Do not photocopy.
For perusal only.

mp

p

p

33

molto *f*

mp *molto* *f*

mp *molto* *f*

mp *molto* *f*

Do not photocopy.
For perusal only.

Slow ♩ = 50

38

ff *mp*

ff *mp*

ff *p*

ff

*choir begins to form a line (or 2 lines) across the front of the stage, joining hands as they reach their destination

Do not photocopy.

For perusal only.

43

mf *mp* *p*

mf *mp* *p*

mf *mp* *p*

p *mf* *mp* *p*

48 *rit.*

Do not photocopy.
For perusal only.

Performance Notes:

- Soloists and choir are to sing on neutral syllables throughout, decided upon by the conductor.
 - ~ The conductor is encouraged to choose vowels and syllables that reflect the choir's native language.
 - ~ These vowels/syllables may change throughout the piece.
 - ~ Lyrical lines should be sung without consonants, with one exception: singers are allowed to sing a slight "H" at the beginnings of phrases in the higher register.
 - ~ Rhythmic lines can be sung with a subtle consonant, for example: "da, da, da."
- Pay close attention to the notes (marked with an *) on the choir formation, they are vital to the performance of the work.

Do not photocopy.
For perusal only.

Jocelyn Hagen



Jocelyn Hagen (b.1980), a native of Valley City, North Dakota, composes music that has been described as “dramatic and deeply moving” (Star Tribune, Minneapolis/St. Paul). Her first forays into composition were via songwriting, and this is very evident in her work. The majority of her compositional output is for voice: solo, chamber and choral. In 2012 she collaborated with choreographer Penelope Freeh to create “Slippery Fish,” a quartet for 2 dancers, soprano and viola, and the piece was reviewed as “completely original in all respects.” (Star Tribune, Minneapolis/St. Paul). Currently she is Artist-in-Residence at the North Dakota State University School of Music, where she teaches, writes curriculum and brings in collaborators to perform her work.

Jocelyn holds degrees in Theory, Composition, and Vocal Music Education from St. Olaf College, as well as a Masters degree in Composition from the University of Minnesota. Jocelyn has received grants and awards from ASCAP, the American Composers Forum, Minnesota Music Educators Association,

the McKnight Foundation, the Jerome Foundation, VocalEssence, the Yale Glee Club, the Lotte Lehman Foundation, the Sorel Medallion Competition, the Cincinnati Camerata, the University of Minnesota, and the San Francisco Song Festival. Her commissions include the American Choral Directors Association, Texas, Georgia and Connecticut Choral Directors Associations, the North Dakota Music Teacher’s Association, The Singers – Minnesota Choral Artists, Trio Callisto, the Murasaki Duo, Cantus, the Houston Chamber Choir, the Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, the St. Olaf Band, NDSU Gold Star Band, the ND Army Band, and the Copper Street Brass Quintet. Her music is independently published through her website as well as through Graphite Publishing, Santa Barbara Music Publishing and Boosey and Hawkes.

Independently published choral works by Jocelyn Hagen:

Agnus Dei, from *amass*
Agnus Dei, from *Ashes of Roses*
April and the Sun
Benedictus, from *amass*
Divine Image
Endless
Forgotten
Gloria, from *amass*
In the Lavender Stillness of Dawn
I Saw Two Clouds at Morning
Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee
Ladies in Green
Moon Goddess
No Rain
Numeri Atque Voces
On My Dreams
Ophelia
Prayer
Salve, Regina
Sanctus, from *amass*
Someone Will Remember Us
Trees Need Not Walk the Earth
Under the Stars, One Holy Night
Veni, Sancte Spiritus
Vespertilians

Extended works for chorus

Ashes of Roses (48’)
amass (65’)
Swimming Into Winter (17’)

SATB choir, piano (four hands)
TTB div. a cappella, Bar. solo
SATB a cappella choir
SSAATTBB a cappella choir, SATB soli
treble choir, women’s choir, SSATB choir, oboe and piano
SATB choir, 2 violins and piano
SSA choir, oboe and piano
SATB a cappella double choir
SSA choir, violin, cello and piano
SSAATTBB a cappella choir
SSAATTBB a cappella choir
SSA choir and piano
SSA choir, 4-hand piano, percussion
SSAATTBB a cappella choir, SSA soli
TTBB and SATB choirs
SATB div. choir, piano, opt. trap set
SATB a cappella choir
SA div. choir, violin and piano
SSA a cappella choir
SSATBB a cappella choir, SA soli
SSAA choir, violin, viola, cello and harp
SATB choir, piano, marimba & rain stick
treble choir, women’s choir, 2 instruments in C and piano
SATB a cappella choir
SATB a cappella choir

requiem for SATB choir, orchestra, and soloists
SATB choir, STB soli, cello solo, cello quartet, guitar and percussion trio
SATB (divisi) choir, winds and percussion