

TAKE NOTE

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RENAISSANCE ARTIST

Composer-conductor
Reginal Wright knows what
singers and conductors
find compelling
pg. 38

CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION MEETS THE CHORAL CANON

Craig Hella Johnson, Alysia Lee,
and Jo Ann Miller discuss what
the traditional choral canon
means today

pg. 8

DIALOGUE: Championing Women's Voices

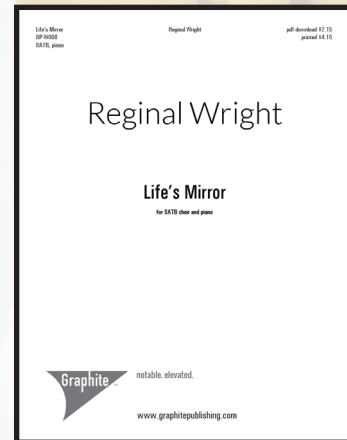
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REGINAL WRIGHT

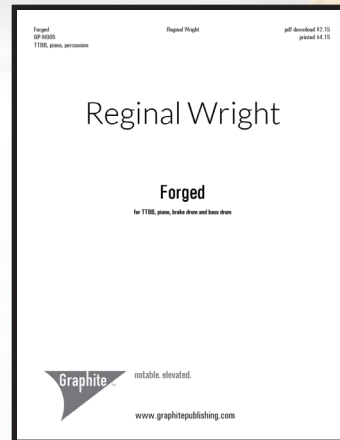
Lyrical writing.
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“Life’s Mirror”
 SATB, piano / 3’
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“There are loyal hearts, there are spirits brave,
 There are souls that are pure and true;
 Then give to the world the best that you have,
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 - Madeline S. Bridges (1844-1920)



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Western art music are fused by the composer to create a work of unique relevance.

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 When you set down pride and pick up humanity
 you have forged a weapon.”
 - Cara Cullen

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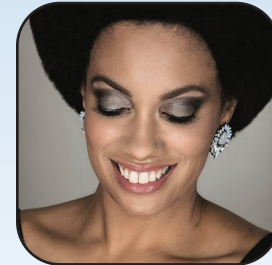
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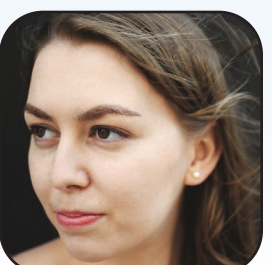
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Elizabeth Alexander

I so love Graphite’s values of accountability and responsiveness. As the music world has evolved over the years so have the needs of composers, and Tim and Jocelyn have adapted admirably to those changing needs. I don’t think I’ve ever put a question, concern, or suggestion forward that Graphite didn’t listen to and take seriously.



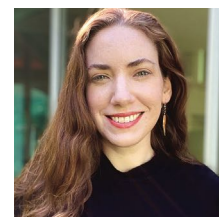
Welcome to the second edition of *Take Note*, Graphite Publishing's official magazine! My name is Laura Krider, and I'm on the Graphite team as Project Manager. As an arts consultant and singer, I was already aware of Graphite's unique business model but didn't understand its true distinction in the choral marketplace until I began collaborating with this remarkable circle of composers, conductors, publishers, and performers.

Graphite's culture is one of honoring the whole person, and I get to see that play out daily: nurturing customer relationships with care, modeling our framework to best serve our community, listening to feedback as we plan for future repertoire releases, celebrating successes, and dynamically promoting composers. I promise I'm not just drinking the Graphite Kool-Aid! I've intersected with numerous publishers, distributors, and composers in my work over the years, and there's something special here.

I'm honored to be a part of an organization that truly values amplifying diverse voices, bringing uniquely crafted music to the choral world, prioritizing learning, and fostering kindness. Thanks for being a part of our community, and enjoy reading *Take Note* as you discover bold new repertoire and gain a deeper understanding of our incredible family of artists!

— Laura Krider

MEET THE TAKE NOTE TEAM



Dale Trumbore, Editor-in-Chief

Dale is a composer and writer based in Azusa, California. She enjoys good novels, bad reality TV, vegan baking, and spending time with her husband and cats.



Jocelyn Hagen, Co-President, Associate Editor and Contributing Writer

Jocelyn is living the dream: composing, singing her heart out at the piano, and playing board games any chance she gets. She spends a lot of time driving her sons around to all their activities, makes a mean vegetarian chili, and is always on the lookout for the next great creative idea.



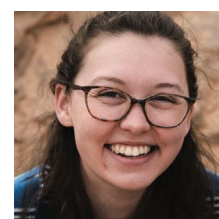
Laura Krider, Project Manager

Laura is a Minneapolis-based artist support consultant and singer who lives for making creative projects happen through collaboration and geeking out on systems. She fills her non-working hours with comedy/culture, good friends, and loving up on her dog Mo.



Jon Campbell, Contributing Writer

Jonathan is a choral conductor, composer, and a first tenor. He loves his two kids and his cat. He enjoys good food and a great glass of red wine.



Erika Malpass, Manager of Communications and Digital Media Content Creator

Erika is a composer, violinist, soprano, and aspiring percussionist. She loves photography, camping, and the mountains.



Timothy C. Takach, Co-President, Graphic Designer

Tim is a composer, singer, conductor, one half of the band Nation and exceptionally tall. Go after his heart with a board game, horror movie or an amazing iced tea.



Reginal Wright with Baylor University Men's Choir

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Our Difficulty Ratings

On our website and here on these pages, we use a rubric to approximately categorize music based on difficulty level.

1: (Easy) No divisi in voice parts, accompaniment doubles or supports vocal parts, diatonic, symmetrical phrases, textures mostly homophonic, simple rhythms, stepwise voice leading (conjunct), moderate ranges, no extended techniques, and limited sustained singing.

2: (Medium Easy) Limited divisi, voices somewhat independent from accompaniment, some chromatics, phrases may be longer or more fragmented, mostly homophonic, moderate rhythmic complexity, some difficult intervals (disjunct motion), moderate ranges, extended techniques are simple, limited sustained singing.

3: (Medium) Limited divisi, unaccompanied, or with independent accompaniment (voice parts not doubled), many chromatics, phrases of varying lengths, more contrapuntal textures, moderately complex rhythms, some difficult intervals (disjunct motion), moderately difficult/challenging ranges, extended techniques are potentially challenging, and some sustained singing.

4: (Medium Difficult) Abundant divisi, unaccompanied, or accompanying instruments are fully independent from voice parts, many chromatics and/or key changes, long and/or broken phrases, potentially little homophony, complex rhythms, many difficult intervals (disjunct motion), difficult/challenging ranges, potentially difficult extended techniques, and a demand for sustained singing.

5: (Difficult) Abundant divisi, unaccompanied, or accompanying instruments are fully independent from voice parts, many chromatics and/or key changes, long and/or broken phrases, potentially little homophony, complex rhythms, extreme ranges, use of challenging or unusual extended vocal techniques, abundant sustained singing.

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Practice tracks are available.

"Blessed Be!" - Melanie DeMore
SATB a cappella / 3' / Difficulty Level 3

"A Path to Each Other" - Jocelyn Hagen & Timothy C. Takach
3-part round a cappella / 3.5' / Difficulty Level 2

"Gamaya" - Paul John Rudoi
SATB or equal voices with doumbek / 4' / Difficulty Level 2

"Look Out Above" - Dessa and Jocelyn Hagen
SATB, SSAA or TTBB a cappella / 4.5' / Difficulty Level 3

"In the Middle" - Dale Trumbore
SATB or SSAA with piano / 5.5' / Difficulty Level 4

"Stardust" - B.E. Boykin
SSA, SATB or TBB with piano and djembe / 4.5' / Difficulty Level 3

"They Are Mother" - Jennifer Lucy Cook
SATB a cappella / 5' / Difficulty Level 4
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GRAPHITE DIALOGUE

CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION MEETS THE CHORAL CANON



Joshua Shank is a collaborator who's lived on both U.S. coasts and borders. When he's not busy thinking up new musical ideas, burning lentils in the pursuit of vegetarian mastery, or cackling at cinematic disasters with his husband, he's advocating for marginalized voices through his work.

What follows is a transcription of a discussion Graphite composer Joshua Shank moderated between conductors Craig Hella Johnson, Alysia Lee, and Jo Ann Miller on December 11, 2023 via Zoom. Responses have been edited for length.

Joshua Shank: *Today's panel is focused on how we deal with the canon of works that were/are passed down to us by our choral progenitors. The title for today's exploration, "Cultural Transformation Meets the Choral Canon," isn't meant to imply the banishment of any works or composers or musical movements but rather as a reminder that music is art, art is people, and—despite our best efforts to get everything right or fit something in the correct box—people and art can be beautifully messy. Currently we're confronted with a musical/cultural moment of transformation that seems to be filled with ideas of reappraisal and honesty, and maybe even a large dose of humility. It's because of all those things that I'd like to thank our panelists for having this conversation about how they have greeted this moment in their practice in such a public way.*

I'd like to start by asking everyone here what that term, "the canon," means to you?

Jo Ann Miller: I think that primarily, as a conductor—my career has been primarily as a conductor/educator and especially as an educator of other conductors—I've always felt that it was part of my responsibility to present the canon to the musicians under my tutelage and care. To me, that means presenting the best of every genre and every style period, [and that] is what I try to offer to my singers and conductors as they're learning and growing as musicians. So the canon isn't just the *Western* canon, although, of course, a lot of it is because that's how most of us were trained. But I try to view [it] based on my own experience, my own exploration, my own study, and so forth. So that's kind of a simple way to look at it. I don't feel like the canon is only music from the last 500 years and then kind of stops at the contemporary world; it's *all of it*, and it's the best that we can find and offer to our singers.

Craig Hella Johnson: I grew up in my own training understanding it to mean a body of music that was important, perhaps important and influential in terms of shaping our thinking moving forward. It was always sort of handed down to me as, "This is the repertoire on whose shoulders we stand," so there was a sense of monumental importance given to it. And there was some assumption, too—I mean, it was never discussed,

of course—that some scholars had met regularly off in some Belgian hideaway [to determine] what was in this canon. [Laughs.] I remember as students, we used to begin to ask, "Who determined what's in that canon?" [But there was also] an understanding of, "This is the best music. This is the music from which we draw our greatest learning and inspiration." Lots of assumptions, of course, most of which we weren't aware of as we inherited [the canon]... and then perhaps as we paid it forward.

Also—he's sometimes a controversial name to bring up—but I used to read a lot of [American literary critic Harold Bloom]. He wrote a book called *The Western Canon* [which] mostly referred to literature. But I remember [his concept that] for something to be considered in the canon...something needed to have qualities that were at once both strange and familiar. And that always intrigued me because that made it sort of more personal; what's canonical in *my* realm?

You mentioned humility, and I would say right now is a time of just great humility. Not even just a little. I feel so kind of humbled right now, and just in a listening mode. I don't really use the word ["canon"]; I'm sort of in a waiting period. So this is an interesting conversation. I was actually a little nervous about it just because it's loaded.

Alysia Lee: It's a hard word for me. It feels limited, and almost oppressive, and it reminds me of even starting my training in elementary and middle school, being presented with the canon, being presented with a body of work that had value musically, and juxtaposing that with the music making that I did at home or in [my] community as different and not as worthy of investigation or excitement. And as a young person, sometimes I felt excited to have the opportunity to explore the canon. But over time, I've grown kind of resentful of it and of the inherent nature of its greatness. I say this everywhere, but "Beyoncé writes much better songs than Brahms, and I won't hear anything to the contrary." [Laughs.] You won't convince me otherwise! Music is evolving all the time, and greatness is happening now, and it's happened before. So, while I know there's a lot of language about exploding the canon, the canon, as it exists, has been a tool to train people to understand that European tradition

is inherently more important, worthy of codification, inherently greater, and more complicated and complex and sophisticated than other types of music making. Part of my training was to suspend my disbelief that that was true and kind of operate and create, like, a dual place for myself. And as I've gotten older, I realized that the canon doesn't have to be that, but that's the tool [and] how it's used—especially in educational spaces—to convince us of white supremacy, really. And so I am [sometimes] resentful of the canon and, while I love so much of the music there, I've decided for my own music making and listening just to embrace beauty as I see it and to embrace "aesthetic" versus to embrace the inherent excellence of any type of music or to set any type of music aside as more worthy than another. So, for me, it's a hard word to hear, and I get excited when people [are] looking to expand beyond it.

Joshua: *It feels like a good dose of "productive discomfort" to contemplate how the historical canon so clearly excluded musics from outside its own culture. At this point, the statistics published on programming at major symphony orchestras and opera companies about who they have performed over their history—and therefore who they have not—cannot be denied and are challenging to ignore once you see the numbers.*

One of the easy narratives for folks to grasp onto when it comes to concepts like anti-racism seems to be (at least on the surface) the act of unquestionably rejecting something at some level. I know it's much more nuanced than that, of course—and I'm definitely guilty of wanting the clarity and comfort that comes from taking a clear stand on something—but given this environment/appetite for critiquing the canon, Craig, what might be some things you attempt to weigh when deciding to program music from this body of work?

Craig: As I said before, it's something that I approach very humbly right now. And I have to think about, "Why are we having *this* conversation at all? And then why are we having *all* of these conversations like this?" And it is because in this historical process of assigning some critical power to certain people—and this was before our time; even to guide us [or] to sort of shape what is important culturally, musically, in this case—[we have] inherited that as a practice and kind of



Fábio Tenório, "Symphony of Colors"

[weigh] everything against it. But now I'm trying to ask questions of...the present moment. The one thing about this present time and all of the questions that have been raised is that I am simply taking it a day at a time, a month at a time, not even a [concert] season at a time, but for the work that I do with the groups that I work with or the places where I am a conduit for some kind of performance, just [saying], "What is it that is wanting to be expressed in this moment? What is it that's needing to be expressed?" I'm thinking about the audience. I'm thinking about the singers, thinking about the culture. It's a real time simply to be listening...and then at some point needing to make a decision. But I am—frankly, not *forgetting*—but suspending for the moment the old criteria that were handed down to me...[knowing] I can't get rid of my past and my inheritance, and I wouldn't want to. I just have to wrestle with all of that.

Joshua: *In the Zeitgeist right now—particularly with younger generations—there seems to be an emphasis on active anti-racism, not just passive non-racism. Do you see a way that this idea of activism*

¹ National Public Radio. Trelles, Luis. "Finding a place at the Met, this opera sings in a language of its own," November 27, 2023; *New York Times*. Cooper, Michael. "The Metropolitan Opera Won't Reopen for Another Year," September 23, 2020; *The Violin Channel*. "Study Reveals Women Compose 5% of Pieces in Orchestral Programs," September 21, 2021; Institute for Composer Diversity. Deemer, Rob, Cory Meals, P.J. Corron, Humay Gasimzadeh, and Jessica Sisti. "2023 Orchestra Repertoire Report."

might be meaningfully applied to the engagement with the performance and study of classical music?

Alysia: I think if classical music wants to survive, and I think it's questionable whether it should or should not—with my own classical music degree, I'll say that—that it will have to shift to welcome a spirit that is antithetical to what classical music is. The “spirit of the now,” especially with young people, is collectivism, and classical music is rooted in so much individualism. I'm not saying it's not possible, but I think, as a person who considers themselves a classical musician, what I'm really interested in is the next phase. What happens when collectivism is a part [of it]? What new ensembles do we get? What new sounds? What new timbres are we introduced to? How does the music shift and change? Do we have to keep hearing music that sounds like a more modern version of what we heard 200 years ago? Or is it impossible to embrace something completely new?

As a young person growing up, [my] teachers would talk and say, “Hip hop isn't real music. This music...is real music.” I mean, that starts early in music education, and it pervades the space. As a young person, you really don't know how to deal with that.

Craig: [As a grad student, I had] thought music naively was sort of apart from all the places where people would take a thing and make it a power system over somebody else. I started to see, “Oh, this is happening in music too.” Like [people saying] “My music is better than your music,” that broke my heart. My inner six-year-old just kind of [felt] heartbroken.

I grew up improvising [on the piano]. I played by ear before I did anything else. I was banging with little fists as a three-year-old, and I remember my piano teacher—may she rest in peace—but she just kind of shamed me for that, [implying] “We read music and it has structure and form.” And I had to fight my way back from that because I was pure joy when I was banging on that piano. And it took me a long time to sort that out and to figure out, “Why is that bad?” To have finally a few teachers down the road that said, “Your ear is a beautiful thing. Use it.” I became so thankful for that.

Alysia: I will never forget the first time I heard “Real Love” by Mary J. Blige. It was a vocal timbre I'd never heard before. We'd never heard hip hop mesh with pure R&B in that same way. And I was twelve and I remember being like, “What is this?”

When do we get that moment in the classical music world to hear something that is just profoundly unique? And the answer is when we start to invite more [people] in and don't train them out of their unique voice. [By that, I mean] we don't train them out of their individual identities...for the sake of building up the tradition of classical music. So I think there's a lot to be done there. The young people are the ones then that are leading the way towards some brighter musical future, which is really exciting.



Joshua: *Jo Ann, you've taught at North Dakota State University for nearly 35 years: a public school which not only offers graduate degrees for aspiring doctors or masters of music, but also—and maybe more importantly—serves the region it's located in. Over the many years you've taught there, how have you seen the movement we're talking about manifest itself in the choral art?*

Alysia Lee

Jo Ann: Well, we are probably one of the least diverse populations in the country to start with, [so I would say] it's not as common for our singers to come to us with the same diversity of background musically [or] culturally as singers from places with a more diverse population. Many of them are coming from rural communities, most from small places.

Maybe it was about ten years ago [that] my colleagues and I started thinking about all the ideas that were bubbling up in the music world, and especially in the choral world, about repertoire and the canon. And we were all concerned with—having lived our whole lives except for graduate work in this relatively undiverse population—“How then can we address these things with our students with any kind of understanding?” So we started with three different symposia that we produced over the last ten years. The first one was focused on choral music of the Americas, and we had composers and conductors from Central America, South America, [and] Canada come to campus, and they brought their music with them. They worked with our choirs at NDSU as well as public school choirs and community choirs [in the area] as well. We had a great experience with expanding our repertoire and understanding the repertoire in that way, and it was a very good [opportunity] for the students as well. And then two years later our symposium focus was on contemporary choral composition, and choral composers from all over the country presented their works.

With our third symposium we wanted to explore the topic [of] the relevance of choral music. This one symposium was probably the most important one because there were many presentations and repertoires examined, and discussions about how music, especially choral music, can continue to be relevant in our communities. There were just so many

wonderful things happening, of course—the justice choirs, prison choirs, choirs for people with disabilities and their caregivers, and all kinds of things like this—where people were making music in their communities in a way that to them was supporting underrepresented people.

I have to say that one of the more difficult things to come to terms with has been the desire to do music that expands all of us, especially ourselves and our students, and yet not appropriate anyone else's repertoire. And that is a real thing. I just want to do justice to whatever music that's new to me and music that's important to the singers or that's important to have and is relevant to all of the things that are happening in the world and in our students' lives and in the country.

But there is that kind of “bump” to get over, I think, for choral conductors: “How do you choose repertoire now?” Because when it was primarily what we were taught as part of the canon, you chose music that moved you...in some way. Maybe the text moved you. Maybe you thought the structure was particularly impressive, or there were some parts of the musical elements that just really spoke to you, maybe harmonically, or a gorgeous melody that everybody just loved singing because it worked so well in the voice. I mean, you chose the music based on all of those things. Then when you're trying to expand your understanding and your knowledge of repertoire that isn't in your background, then you still have that same filter of wanting to be respectful, wanting to do it with the right knowledge behind how you present it. It can be intimidating to program new and diverse repertoire if you aren't confident that your understanding is deep enough, or if you feel you may be unintentionally appropriating someone else's music. I have to believe that if we want to continue to grow to be inclusive in our repertoire choices, then we need to believe that most conductors are coming from a good place of wanting to honor the music and the composer by programming it, even if the actual presentation isn't as authentic as it might be.

But I also do want to say that for me, even if I were going to teach another 20 years, it would never be “either/or.” I think it can be both. I would not want to give up the music from “the canon” after hearing from my students year after year how important *Messiah*

Jo Ann Miller



performances have been to them, for example. And I think that one of the reasons they love it is because we do it every year and they grow from it musically and vocally. One of my sophomores came up to me after our performances this week and said, “This second year was so much more fun! And I think I really helped the first-years because I know it really well now.” And after two years, it means something to them. It's not like *Messiah* is that much greater than any other piece, but it still speaks to my choirs partly because of the tradition of singing something that many people in the world sing. I wouldn't want to give that up.

The challenge has been constantly searching out new music and understanding it in order to perform it authentically and expressively. This, alongside performing the music that we have loved—that brings beauty to ourselves, our singers, and our audiences—is still a worthy goal.

Joshua: *It seems almost a given now that by incorporating genres, instruments, and compositions from underrepresented cultures and communities, we can create a more inclusive and resonant musical dialogue that tells a fuller story of our collective experience. This more harmonious—or perhaps more accurate—blend could then serve to expand our understanding of music, not as a static relic of Western culture, but as a living, evolving form of human expression which enriches our seeing of each other.*

Given how policies and systems surrounding the selection of repertoire or guest clinicians can clearly perpetuate discrimination, what changes do you think could be made in music education curricula to challenge the dominance of the Western canon and create a more inclusive corpus of works and techniques for teaching?

Alysia: It may sound funny to folks that are outside of art making, but there [is] not enough opportunity for young people from K-12 to engage in—say if you were in a dance class [for example], kinesthetically presenting your ideas, the things that matter to you, your priorities. There's a lot of reproduction happening in arts education. Music is one of the hardest-lined places of all of the five arts disciplines in public schools where tradition really convinces a lot of people—policymakers, even—that it's not possible for people to create music.

I've had people say, “My kids don't know enough.” So just imagine, when a kindergarten student... [arrives] to you, they've had five years of being rocked to sleep with beautiful lullabies. They've had five years of—in my house [growing up] every Saturday morning—waking up to gospel music for three hours

² Editors' note: This discussion took place a week after the Texas Choral Directors Association shared a post on social media about concerns raised by members over Alysia Lee's engagement to conduct the 2024 Texas Middle School/Junior High All-State Choir. Among the concerns directors had were that they thought her decades-long body of work helping institutions dismantle oppressive systems, traditions, and practices seemingly had no place in Texas. There was a unanimous decision by the editorial board of this magazine to go forth with this scheduled discussion due to, in no small part, the need to have these difficult conversations. Graphite Publishing stands by Alysia Lee and the incredible work she does in rehearsal spaces, performances, and arts communities all over the nation.

until the house was clean. They've had five years of block parties all summer long with live bands playing music. Five years of maybe church as well, right? And so to think that those students are arriving to your music classroom empty is to be blind to the truth of the fact that young people arrive full of knowledge and experiences and preferences and opinions and musical experiences...but we see them as devoid of knowledge. When they show up, instead of "digging into them"—like [Brazilian pedagogue] Paulo Freire would say—we think, "We have to fill them up."³ And that's really the crux of the problem. When you learn a language, you don't just read it. You have to speak it. You have to write it yourself. And that lack of interest in developing that kind of fluency for all students is oppressive, and it creates class[ism] inside of music making.

The ensemble I founded, the Sister Cities Girlchoir, set a strategic artistic goal in 2018 that, by 2024, half of the repertoire we perform will be original works from our students and teachers and families. And we had a lot of things we had to then learn how to do, like guide collective composition! [Laughs.] We had no idea how to do that! But the information is out there. I have a lot of what I call "musician audacity," meaning I know that I can do hard things because I've learned very challenging things, right? I've taken huge scores and memorized them so I can [certainly] learn...new pedagogical techniques. That investment is transformative and is the equivalent of, again, not telling some people that their voices don't matter. And so we have to just relook at and restructure music education, I think, to make sure that the creative process is available to all students from K-12 at every level, no matter what kind of music making it is—in ensembles, in general music—that they have space to respond musically to prompts and questions and ideas. And I think that will be really transformative and will echo the kinds of social change that we're hoping happens in the streets...by saying, "Your voice matters. Your perspective matters. And let's talk about how you can make some choices to respond musically." That's what we should be teaching in a music classroom. So when that happens, I'll be thrilled!

Joshua: *Jo Ann, our discussion leads me to wonder how you teach your students about cultural voices which may have been overlooked in the past. Given that this notion is what the current generation of future educators seems to be interested in—or at least aware of—how have you engaged with this desire in your teaching?*

Jo Ann: Yes, you are right, my students are very interested in this and should be, of course. It's the music that often reflects what's happening in the world, so they will often bring it to me because it means something to them. And in my graduate contemporary Choral Lit classes, all I have to do is give a simple prompt [like], "What is the new repertoire that you're hearing that is important to you, and why?" They are definitely very eager to bring me the music and the concepts that are important to them. Also, several of our graduate

students in choral conducting in recent years have also been composers. So they are themselves also writing music and talking about the texts they choose and why. We have often performed music [by] the students—not just our grad students, but undergraduates as well.

When possible we will have guest artists in residence to help expand our program. Jocelyn Hagen taught composition for us for several years, but also did a seminar on contemporary choral composers. She inspired many young composers, and continues to do so. Our choirs collaborated with her on several cutting edge works—particularly exciting was [a piece for choir and electronics called] "Hummingbird." It was an exciting project! Also, I'm constantly looking for repertoire that I can fit into my programs. I mean, when you're in an educational setting, we do have some—well, not really *barriers*—but some guidelines. In certain times of the year, you have recurring projects—such as our high school choral festival, our *Messiah* performances, the spring tour—[which] dictate to a certain extent what we can program. And I want to, like I said before, not have "either/or" programming, so I do probably have one third of the repertoire every year that is early music of some kind. And then the rest is contemporary. Or I'll often try to build a set which delves into what's important to the singers by talking with my students and colleagues and asking, "What's moving you right now? What is on your mind right now? What are the things that are the most important to you right now? And what is the music that speaks to you in that regard?"

Joshua: *Craig, do you think the human emotions and experiences expressed in the works of canonical composers can transcend race, culture, and historical context in American society? If so, how do we connect listeners to that stream in a compelling way?*

Craig: As I mentioned, I'm not even really using the word ["canon"] anymore. So I understand your question based on my past use of it, but I've sort of released it because it's so fraught and heavy. I have tended to take an approach right now where, if I'm going to select a work to perform that is from what I used to call "the canon," I can only do it with full present-of-moment awareness. Like [a feeling of] "I'm alive. I'm conscious. I'm present to why I'm making this choice to do this in some brand new ways." I've used language that I want to take this canonical piece and liberate it from its chains. And if I can't do that, then I won't attempt to. And I mean, sometimes it's...an attempt to humbly say, "I'm going to try."

I think about "What is it to take a piece of music just of its own essence?" I mean, is it even possible? I'm not just going to put something in front of people and [say,] "Hey, come and enjoy this beautiful piece which is one of the most important works in the literature because it's from the canon." I mean, rather, to say, "Let's be around this piece of music together and experience it." Can we invite audience members to have first-level experiences? Is there a place this moves in your body,

³ Freire was well-known for taking a stand against what he dubbed the "banking" method of education. He believed that seeing students as empty vessels just waiting to be filled with knowledge by teachers transformed students into objects simply meant to receive knowledge and that, in the end, that method attempted to control thinking and action. He pushed against this traditional means of education because he thought it inhibited the creative power and potential of the students.



Craig Hella Johnson

just as we [might experience something] from someone who's writing a fresh song in their lives in this moment? Can we have that [engaging] experience with it? I don't know if [or how] those things can be created...but that's my interest in how to approach that right now.

And I would just say [I] kind of keep coming back to that word: humility. I love that you were saying, Alysia, [that] so much of what we do right now requires so much courage, because I think a lot of us also feel like, "Oh, if I do this, I might fumble it." What governs me is a loving heart and a desire for justice and [to] find our way to truth somehow in a way that everything belongs; everyone belongs. If those are my intentions, I can take a brave step out and say, "I'm doing this as a creative, as an artist. My goal is not to have the final word on anything, to fix anything for all time. My goal is to make art here out of a loving heart and a desire for...justice" and do my best with that. But I'm so glad we're having these conversations again and again, too, because it's just so important.

Alysia: I once was hanging out with the people from Mural Arts Philadelphia—they're responsible for a lot of the murals in Philly—and we were talking about their creation process, and I said, "Do you go back to the murals every year and touch them up? How do you make sure that the murals last forever?" And he leaned over to me; he said, "Alysia, nothing lasts forever." And I realized that part of my training [had been a philosophy around] the preservation of classical music...and that [letting go] might be too heavy for us to do.

"Nothing lasts forever." I know that that might be hard for people to hear, that maybe in 100 years people will have forgotten some of the people that we cherish [today], but new things will emerge and take its place, and it's okay. Things don't have to survive for eons in order for them to be meaningful and powerful. It really shocked me [laughs] to think about the ways that [my training gave me] a colonization component that "it has to last forever." There's nothing wrong with experiencing beautiful things and time erasing them—if that's what happens—[because] new things will emerge, and the people that are there at that moment will take care of those new things, and we can trust in the future versions of humanity to preserve art. Singing will never go away. ▽

PANELISTS:

Conductor and composer **Craig Hella Johnson** is noted for his emotionally resonant and artistically sensitive approach to choral music, leading the Austin-based professional choral ensemble, *Conspire*, where his work has earned him a GRAMMY® and numerous other accolades. He is known for his signature "collage" style of arranging which blends sacred and secular, classical and contemporary, traditional and popular styles. A respected educator, Johnson served as the Director of Choral Activities at the University of Texas and frequently lectures at conferences. He holds degrees from St. Olaf College, Juilliard, and Yale, and has studied with Helmuth Rilling.

Alysia Lee is recognized for championing equity and decolonization in leadership and the arts. A native of Baltimore, she founded *Sister Cities Girlchoir*, a program that empowers girls through music now in its eleventh season. As a composer, she edits Hal Leonard's *Exigence for Young Voices* series which uplifts Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Asian composers writing for young voices. An advocate for equitable arts education, Lee has served as a board member of *Chorus America* and National Advisor to the Center for Arts Education and Social Emotional Learning. She trained at the University of North Carolina and the Peabody Conservatory, with executive certifications from Harvard and La Salle Universities. Learn more at AlysiaLee.com.

Jo Ann Miller is a celebrated conductor and educator known for her over three decades spent training the next generation of choral musicians as Director of Choral Activities at North Dakota State University. She has served in various leadership roles with the American Choral Directors Association, as Artistic Director of the NDSU Baroque Festival, and chorus master for the Fargo-Moorhead Symphony Orchestra. Recognized for her decades of contributions to music education, Miller was honored as a University Distinguished Professor in 2009, the highest honor awarded to faculty at NDSU. Her academic credentials include degrees from NDSU, the University of North Dakota, and the University of Cincinnati.

The works of Boston-based composer, **Joshua Shank**, have been widely performed by educational and professional ensembles alike. In 2002, he became the youngest recipient ever of the Raymond W. Brock Composition Award by the American Choral Directors Association, and his compositions have sold over 175,000 copies worldwide. Joshua earned a degree in Music Education from Luther College, where he studied conducting with Weston Noble and graduate degrees in Music Composition and Musicology from the University of Texas at Austin and has taught on the faculties of Gonzaga University, Valley City State University, and Eastern Washington University. Learn more at JoshuaShank.com.

GALA CHORUSES: PROGRAMMING HISTORY, PROGRAMMING THE FUTURE



By Saunder Choi for Graphite Publishing

Saunder Choi is a Los Angeles-based Filipino composer and choral artist whose works have been performed internationally by various groups including Conspire, the Philippine Madrigal Singers, Santa Fe Desert Chorale, Los Angeles Master Chorale, Pacific Chorale, World Youth Choir, Brightwork New Music, People Inside Electronics, and many others. As an arranger and orchestrator, Saunder has written for Tony-Award winner Lea Salonga, Singapore Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, Orquestra Filarmónica Portuguesa, Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles, San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus, etc.

Since their organization in the wake of the historic Stonewall Riots of 1969, LGBTQ+ choruses have been at the forefront of social justice and advocacy music programming. The genesis of such ensembles can be traced to Philadelphia's ANNA Crusis Feminist Choir, followed by the Stonewall Chorale and the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus, eventually forming the organization now recognized as GALA Choruses. These choirs provide safe spaces that affirm LGBTQ+ identities and foster local communities united by a shared passion for singing together. Through the commissioning of original works and custom arrangements, these institutions have become hubs for new choral repertoire.

GALA choirs are currently grouped into four different voicing categories: SA (treble) choirs, TB (gay "men's") choirs, SATB (mixed) choirs, and trans/non-binary voices. Each category informs the genre of music programmed, with treble and mixed choruses performing more "contemporary classical" works, along with multicentric "global" music.

Jane Ramseyer Miller, Artistic Director of GALA Choruses, Inc., notes the practice of commissioning and performing feminist advocacy works among treble choirs (e.g., Andrea Ramsey's *Suffrage Cantata*). The Artistic Director of the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus (SFGMC), Jake Stensberg, highlights the need to spark meaningful conversations through

programming choices. Many GALA ensembles program queer, BIPOC, and underrepresented composers, showcasing text written by queer poets/lyricists and pieces that celebrate queer joy beyond survival. Recent major oratorios like Craig Hella Johnson's *Considering Matthew Shepard* and Andrew Lipka's *I Am Harvey Milk* take on queer stories and weave in universal themes of grief, hope, love, and legacy.

Along with contemporary classical music, TB choirs generally perform more pop music and musical theater. SFGMC and the Dallas-based Turtle Creek Chorale both regularly perform on their local symphony orchestra's pops and holiday concerts. Turtle Creek Chorale conductor Sean Baugh highlights the practice of finding arrangements and arrangers that honor the "choral presentation" instead of "pop a cappella" (a la Pentatonix, etc). Ernest "EJ" Harrison, Artistic Director of the Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles (GMCLA), notes the importance of intersection as GMCLA programming aims for equal engagement with singers and the audience. Moreover, about 40% of GMCLA singers learn by ear/rote, underscoring the importance of familiarity for access and inclusion. For Stensberg, the interest, skills, and life experience of singers weigh heavily on his programming choices. The traditions of drag, parody, choreography, etc. are a meaningful part of the gay community and are often incorporated in concerts.

Non-binary and trans voices require composers to



Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles



Jacob Stensberg conducting the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus

reimagine the traditional hierarchy and gendering of voices (SATB) and write music that gives equal access and inclusion for all. This might mean redistributing the melody so that all voice types have an opportunity to sing it. Chorus directors underscore the importance of a person's vocal health and their ability to sing healthily within a range. Composers writing for non-binary and trans voices may consider writing parts that are flexible enough to accommodate octave displacement. Frank Ticheli introduced "flex arrangements" to the band world, a concept wherein a piece is written so that it is playable even with unequal numbers of instruments on a part. This could be adapted to choral writing. Conductors programming inclusively may also explore "equal voice" writing or partner songs, utilizing rounds and canonic gestures. GMCLA incorporates an optional falsetto section—"Section F"—for those who are more comfortable singing in that register. What a great opportunity for composers to write an interesting obbligato line!

LGBTQ+ activism has come a long way since the Stonewall riots, but we still have a long way to go. Telling the stories of our community is still necessary and relevant. GALA Chorus conductors continue to take bold steps by collaborating with underrepresented artists and choosing to tell nuanced narratives of the LGBTQ+ community. They continue to balance mission statements with purposeful programming, finding fearless and creative responses to help LGBTQ+ communities and allies navigate the world.

Many thanks to Jane Ramseyer Miller, Jake Stensberg, Ernest "EJ" Harrison, and Sean Baugh for enriching this discourse with informed perspectives through their insights and stories. ▼

TRIED & TRUE GALA PROGRAMMING

"Let Your True Self Sing" - Carlos Cordero
SATB div. a cappella / 3' / Difficulty Level 4

"I Dream a World" - Jeffrey Derus
SATB, piano / 6' / Difficulty Level 4

Verum Corpus - Saunder Choi
SATB, string quartet / 20' / Difficulty Level 4

"Get Curious" - Elizabeth Alexander
SSAA a cappella / 4' / Difficulty Level 4

Lifting as We Climb - Joan Szymko
SSAA, 6 speakers, piano, E^b sax, drumkit / 30' / Difficulty Level 3

"When the Dust Settles" - Mari Esabel Valverde
SSAA, piano / 7' / Difficulty Level 4

"To My Brother" - Joseph Gregorio
TTTBBB a cappella / 5' / Difficulty Level 4

"You Find Yourself Here" - Dale Trumbore
TTBB a cappella / 3.5' / Difficulty Level 4

"me(n)" - Joshua Shank
TTBB, piano / 5' / Difficulty Level 4

"Love Isn't Static" - Grace Brigham
3-part round / 2' / Difficulty Level 2

"A Path to Each Other" - Jocelyn Hagen and Timothy C. Takach
3-part round / 3.5' / Difficulty Level 2

"2 Rounds on Poems By Wendell Berry" - J. David Moore
flexible voicing / 4' / Difficulty Level 3

GRAPHITE DIALOGUE

CHAMPIONING WOMEN'S VOICES



Last fall, Jonathan Campbell and Jocelyn Hagen sat down for a conversation to introduce their two new choral series championing women's voices: *Voces Feminae* and *Compose Like a Girl*. The following interview has been edited and condensed for length and clarity.

Jocelyn Hagen: Why did you decide to start the *Voces Feminae* series?

Jonathan Campbell: After some great conversations with you, we concluded that by combining your passion and resources at Graphite with my interests in research and choral repertoire, we could make an exciting contribution to the repertoire by bringing to light some scores by neglected women composers. I realized that there was a big gap in my knowledge of historical female composers, and there's no better way to fill a gap in your knowledge than by doing the work yourself. I appreciated that I could play a part in this important rediscovery.

There's been some research done already on these neglected female composers, but most of it has stayed in the academic world. There aren't many editions that are practical to perform from, so that became our goal: to create performing editions of these works that we can share with the broader choral community.

Jocelyn: Which piece from the series has the most interesting story?

Jonathan: They're all interesting, but probably the "Alleluja, Gloria in Excelsis" by Fanny Hensel, because I had to reconstruct it. The piece is the conclusion to a larger festive piece she wrote about the Feast of St. Cecilia. As a researcher, you want to start with the source. I was able to find a facsimile of her handwritten score in a German library and transcribed that, which was a fascinating experience. There was no piano accompaniment in the facsimile: she wrote a piano part, but it stopped about halfway through. I used the opening part of the song to get an idea of what her piano writing was like. My goal was to rebuild a piano accompaniment that she might

have found acceptable, not to put my fingerprint on it.

Jocelyn: I love that. It actually answers another question I was going to ask you, which is, how are you getting to flex your compositional muscles with this series? Is there any other way that you've gotten a chance to use them?

Jonathan: I am approaching this process primarily as an editor. Our goal is to create editions of these works that will be accessible to today's choirs and audiences so these fantastic composers have their chance to shine. Initially, I was looking at the music as a purist, and I didn't want to change the original music at all. But you helped me realize that our job was to create a polished performing edition, and that required a bit of editing or rewriting.

Jocelyn: These female composers did not get the opportunity to workshop their pieces like we do today. I like to believe that if they had taken the piece to a rehearsal, they would have rewritten a few things or would have adjusted things to make it better. So, we're doing that process for them, because if these pieces are too strange or if they don't work well, they'll continue to sit there and people won't perform them.

Jonathan: That kind of goes back to what I said earlier. These aren't academic editions. Some of these composers have already been published in other editions, but the scores are generally very expensive and they're academic, so there are tons of critical notes, and they're much more what you'd look at in graduate school, rather than what you'd buy and hand out to a choir.

Jocelyn: What was it like to work with Jennifer Lucy Cook on the new arrangements? Like,

how much back and forth was there? What did you talk about in terms of the source material?

Jonathan: Jennifer had a lot of interesting ideas, and we let her run with her imagination. One of those ideas was to change the language of "Star of Columbia." The original text was very colonial, sort of Manifest Destiny. Jennifer wanted to update it so it was less nationalistic. She came up with revisions to the text, making it about the things that bring Americans together, like our beautiful country and landscapes. I thought that was a great idea, and it helped her to feel more invested in the music.

At the beginning of the project, we talked about the American Shape-Note tradition, and what characterizes that particular kind of music: lots of open fifths, parallel motion, a kind of strident tone and character, and a kind of unrefined, rugged American feel. She pulled that into each of her arrangements in some way, and then, after some feedback from conductors, we decided to create multiple voicings for a few of the pieces to fill out the texture. So, if you have a larger choir, you can dig into the more complex version, but if you have a smaller choir, you can be perfectly content with the simpler one.

She arranged three 19th century hymn tunes by American female composers, and I think that turned out really well.

Jocelyn: I think those are going to be some of the bestsellers within the series, honestly. How did you find Matilda Durham?

Jonathan: That was an interesting process. As I started searching for composers for the project, I was wondering, where are the American women? We know about some North American female composers that are in the public domain. Amy Beach is probably one of the earliest ones.

I'm a church musician by trade, and I thought there might be a female hymn tune writer somewhere. So, I thought, what was the earliest one I could find? I was poking around 19th-century hymns, and her name, Matilda, came up. I found that she published the tune "Promised Land" in the 1835 hymnal *Southern Harmony*. That's really old for America, really early printing. This may be the first women composer to be published in North America.

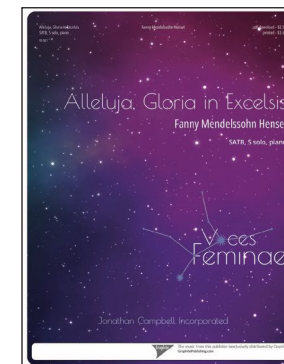
Jocelyn: That's really neat. What has been the biggest challenge in launching the series?

Jonathan: Probably copyright. It's not exciting or sexy, but just copyright issues. Several of the earlier female composers have already been researched. There's a Renaissance-era composer named Alba Trissina and her music has been transcribed and published. We could do an edition of her music, but we'd have to go back and find the primary source material.

In the Hannah Cohoon arrangement that Jennifer Cook did, I found a facsimile of the handwritten Library of Congress hymn tune in an art history book. It was important to me, especially in the context of the project, that I did this work with as much integrity as I could. So I had to make some phone calls, and you helped me talk to a lawyer about the facsimiles from Paris. And then the other part that's been difficult is getting the final edits done and getting everything wrapped up so everyone's happy.

Jocelyn: Who are the historic female composers featured in the series thus far?

Jonathan: Fanny Hensel, Felix Mendelssohn's sister. Louise Farrenc, who was pretty well-known in France but is less familiar to us. Louise Farrenc was a 19th-century French composer, mostly known for her orchestral and chamber music. And then Hannah Cohoon, who's a very



"We hope that these pieces that have been obscure or not appreciated will now be more widely available. Choral music only lives when it is sung."

interesting character. She's known for her Shaker folk art and for her paintings.

Jocelyn: Who's next? Which composers are on your list that you want to add?

Jonathan: There are so many! Marion Bauer, Francesca Caccini, some motets from the Las Huelgas codex, Julia Perry, Maddalena Casulana, Marianna Martines.

Jocelyn: Awesome. I have one last question for you: What do you hope for in terms of impact?

Jonathan: Well, we hope that these pieces that have been obscure or not appreciated will now be more widely available. Choral music only lives when it is sung. What we ultimately hope for is that programming music by female composers becomes so normal that we don't need a series to lift them up.

One of the central things about this movement, if we can call it a movement, is deconstructing this hierarchy that's existed for a long time. What we're doing now is making an intentional choice to rebalance and change the matrix of how we think about cultures, people, race, gender, and art. In recognizing the value of work which hasn't traditionally been valued, we all benefit. I hope that we find a richer human experience with more empathy and a deeper perspective on life by emphasizing historically neglected composers.

Jocelyn: Your responses are so thoughtful, Jon. I knew that working with you on Voces Feminae was going to be very fulfilling because you would do it right.

Jonathan: I think a lot of younger women will be inspired by the Compose Like A Girl series. What message would you most like to communicate to them?

Jocelyn: A lot of younger female-identifying composers are not getting much encouragement from the broader publishing world, and that bothers me because that was also what I dealt with. A big part of it is that they need mentorship and help with editing, learning how the publishing business works, networking, and getting their music performed and recorded. All of these are little steps in the ladder to create more opportunities. I like showing these composers that there can be a place where they can get the help they need and that it's possible.

Jonathan: This is part of the same question, but what are some of the ways you can help them aside from being an advocate? Are there common mistakes that not just a young woman, but a young composer might make or may not understand?

Jocelyn: For a lot of the women in this Compose Like A Girl series, this is their very first published work, which is very cool. They've never had an editor before or gone through that process. I'm going through their scores and asking them questions to help them best communicate their ideas. Often I ask them about rhythmic notation, especially if something is syncopated, because there

are ways that it can be notated to be easier to read or less easy to read, even if it's the same rhythm. Sometimes poor rhythmic notation can be a very big barrier and a lot of conductors won't look twice at a piece of music that has poor rhythmic notation. That's one of the biggest things that I go through and help them with. Another thing I work on with composers is thinking about breaths in their scores. There's something very magical in how and when a release happens and the next phrase begins, and if they can be very specific about those moments, it makes a big difference for the piece, and for the interpretation. I like opening up that world to these composers to show them that you can be much more specific in the score, and you'll get the sound that you want if you can pinpoint exactly what you envision for those moments.

Jonathan: Just by the series Compose Like a Girl's existence, you're communicating a rhetorical message. What is that message, especially for young female composers?

Jocelyn: That there are more women out there who are like me, that are wanting to write music and have their voices heard and get programmed. You still don't see many women on concert programs. I was talking to a conductor recently about a big convention coming up, and she glanced at what was programmed, and none of the pieces were by women. And she was like, "What's going on?" We're still having to bring this up and we still have to talk about this. There needs to be more music by women at all levels: music that is very accessible for younger voices, university level, professional level, and everything in between. There still aren't as many of us, but our numbers are growing. I definitely feel that growth happening, and I love to support that in any way I can.

Jonathan: The terms "othering" and "tokenizing" are being broadly used among choral conductors. It's not unlike coming to terms with cultural appropriation. We want to program more historically neglected composers, but we also don't want to "other" them or do it as a "good work" for gaining moral credit. As a female composer yourself, what are your thoughts on this? And what advice would you give someone like me, a white, male conductor?

Jocelyn: Even among me and my other female composer

friends, some of them don't ever want to be referred to as a "female composer," whereas I've kind of embraced it and love it. You're never going to please everybody. I like being surrounded by a bunch of other women in concert form. I think that's a beautiful thing. But yeah, I think maybe it can be done with a classier touch instead of something like "the feminine spirit." My advice to conductors programming women is: try to find a concert theme that speaks to a deeper resonance in what those pieces are about and focus on that instead of our gender.

I think [championing female composers] has to be done genuinely and with integrity, and it's especially important how you describe what you're doing. I think it comes across in the way you promote a concert, how you talk about it on social media, or if you have a pre-concert talk. It's important to make sure the pieces you include fit the theme of your concert, so it isn't just, "I wanted a piece by a woman, so I threw this in." Part of the reason why we're doing these series is so that we can help make conductors' jobs easier, giving them more things to choose from.

Jonathan: I love that. That's a great comment. Why did you decide to name the series Compose Like a Girl?

Jocelyn: I'm glad you asked that question because there's some controversy about this name. Not everybody likes it. It was inspired by an Always commercial from the 2016 Super Bowl. Every time I watch it, I just flat-out cry, because it's all about how when we're girls, we are just kids and we don't see ourselves as others. We see ourselves as kids who can do anything; we think, "that boy's not better than me, I can run faster than him." And then when we start going through puberty, we start feeling different, and we start thinking about what our role is as a woman. We lose our self-confidence and we lose our self-esteem, and we start to put ourselves in a box and think about what we are going to be. In that commercial, and similarly, with this series, the "like a girl" phrase is about reclaiming that positivity and confidence that we had when we were younger.

I love that idea because I was a fierce little musician when I was twelve, right before all this started. And I am also a very feminine person. I've said this many times in interviews, that I knew I wanted to be a mother before I knew I wanted to be a composer. That is very much a part of my identity, and I love it. But being a composer and being very feminine did not coincide very

well, especially when I was still in graduate school. And most of the women that were teaching and that I looked up to embraced that kind of more masculine behavior and appearance to try to be more accepted in that position. And honestly, I couldn't do that even if I tried. I'm way too feminine. I love the stories of women. So many pieces of mine revolve around women, their stories, experiences, and perspectives. That's just who I am. This phrase, "Compose Like A Girl," is simple and memorable. It was really painful to get negative feedback on it the first time we put it out there.

And then there's the argument that I've gotten a lot of times from people I know pretty well, which is, "well, I think fewer women are interested in being composers." It's amazing how many people believe that and how many also believe that fewer women are interested in jobs and technology and all these other things. That's a very common misconception, I think, about what women want.

Jonathan: How does a choral series like Compose Like a Girl contextualize gender fluidity and open-mindedness about gender identity?

Jocelyn: We want to be a part of that conversation. Gender is a big, hot topic right now, and I was having difficulty with how to navigate this at the beginning of this initiative. I was talking to my dear friend Josh Shank, and he pointed out that so many of us feel passionate about our gender identities, and we have that in common. And so we have a statement on the website that talks about how Compose Like A Girl is for all composers who have felt like they are not expected to succeed in this industry, and that absolutely welcomes trans and nonbinary voices. So even though it says "like a girl," it's really about you being your authentic self and being accepted for that.

Jonathan: Is there a piece in your series you want to highlight or that you're excited about?

Jocelyn: I get excited about the fact that some of these women are very young. There's a young woman named Anna Vtipil, and I met her at the University of North Carolina. She was a sophomore in college, and she had written this amazing piece and had it notated beautifully. I was so impressed with her. Her piece "Aurora" is really special. It's very difficult, so not many choirs will want to tackle it, but it's beautiful, and I hope she gets some great experience with that piece in the world so that she continues to write choral music.

Jonathan: And is there a specific message you want to share with emerging female composers?

Jocelyn: That you can do it. There are resources, and we're working to create those for you. ▶



Jocelyn Hagen



Jonathan Campbell





VICTORY VIBES

GRAPHITE COMPOSERS ARE UNSTOPPABLE



RESIDENCIES

Jeffrey Derus

2024 Residency Grant, The Helene Wurlitzer Foundation of New Mexico, Taos, NM

Jocelyn Hagen and Timothy C. Takach

Co-Composers-In-Residence 2022-present True Concord Voices and Orchestra, Tucson, AZ

Tracy Wong

2023-24 Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, Toronto, Canada
2024 National Concert Chorus, Carnegie Hall, New York, NY

B.E. Boykin

One of 3 composers in 2022 New Works Initiative Creative Cohort at MN Opera, Minneapolis, MN

AWARDS

Isaac Lovdahl

“Though the great Waters sleep” Winner, Festival of New American Music Call for Scores, Choral Music

Katerina Gimon

Nominee, 2023 Western Canadian Music Awards, Composer of the Year

Jeffrey Derus

“I Will Go” Winner, 2023 Brock Prize for Professional Composers
“Afternoon on a Hill” Winner, Inversion Ensemble’s 2023 Sandy Fivecoat Memorial Emerging Composition Contest
From Wilderness 2nd place 2023 American Prize Finalist for Large Choral Works
From Wilderness Gold Medal in Composition and Creativity & Originality from the 2023 Global Music Awards

Luke Mayernik

“The Lamb” Winner of the 2023 VOCES8 Composition Competition

Joshua Shank

“Flocking Music” Winner, Juventas New Music Ensemble Call for Scores

RECORDINGS

Carol Barnett

“Christmas Eve, Bells” and “Hodie” on *Dashing Volume 3* from PARMA

Jeffrey Derus

“Home” on *Man Up/Man Down* by Constellation Men’s Ensemble from Sono Luminus

Martha Duncan

Excerpts from *Saskatchewan Songs* on *Voices of Earth and Air Vol. V* from Navona Records

Jocelyn Hagen

AMASS by Eugene Rogers and the University of Michigan Chamber Choir from Navona Records

Timothy C. Takach

“Twas in the Moon of Wintertime” by Seraphic Fire on *The Apple Tree* from Seraphic Fire Media

NOTEWORTHY PREMIERES

Carlos Cordero

“Keep Going,” Turtle Creek Chorale & Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Dallas, TX, 2023
“Vuela,” Kujawa Elementary School Eagle Choir, TMEA, San Antonio, TX, 2024

Jocelyn Hagen

The Song Poet commissioned by Minnesota Opera, Minneapolis, MN, 2023

Timothy Hoekman

NATURE WALKS (I. for SSAA, II. for TTBB), Timber Creek High School, Orlando, FL, 2023

Isaac Lovdahl

“The Orange (with Simple Gifts),” Young New Yorkers’ Chorus Treble Ensemble, New York, NY, 2023

Timothy C. Takach

Unfashioned Creature, 40’ choral ballet adaptation of *Frankenstein*, James Sewell Ballet and imPulse, St. Paul, MN, 2023

Ellen Gilson Voth

“But, we press on...” co-composed with Derrick Skye, Los Angeles Children’s Chorus, Los Angeles, CA, 2023
Lands that draw me home, West Point Glee Club, ACDA Eastern Conference, Providence, RI, 2024

Tracy Wong

“RIUH! (Chaotic Joy),” Vancouver Youth Choir, World Symposium on Choral Music, Istanbul, Turkey, 2023
“Kira!” Colorado Children’s Chorale, Denver, CO, 2023

NEW VENTURES

Carlos Cordero

Created a new professional TTBB choir called un/heard
Finishing the Chorus America Executive Leadership Academy, 2024

Jocelyn Hagen

Launched the Compose Like a Girl podcast alongside the growing choral series, adding 10 new pieces this year, with many more new faces

Paul John Rudoi

“Oranges” added to the Project:Encore database

NOTEWORTHY PERFORMANCES

Dominick DiOrio

SOLARIS Choral Arts Society of Washington, Kennedy Center, Washington, DC, 2023
“A Chain is Broken” Indiana University Jacobs School of Music NOTUS, NCCO 10th Biennial Conference, Atlanta, GA, 2023

Jocelyn Hagen

Croatian premiere of *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, Oratorio Society of MN, Rovinj and Pula, Croatia, 2023

Timothy C. Takach

Premiere of *Helios* with visual projections, True Concord, Tucson, AZ, 2022

**Help us
welcome new
talent to our
Graphite family.**

On the following pages, learn more about
these voices bringing beautiful
music into the world...

Tracy Wong

Dr. Tracy Wong is a choral conductor, music educator, composer, vocalist, and pianist. Her pieces are teaching tools for singers to develop vocal technique, musicianship skills, and artistry. As part of her continued search to define her Chinese-Malaysian-Canadian identity, her music also shows the coming-together of different languages and musical elements that continue to influence her composition writing.

“I write to serve the singers and their choral leaders. It is my hope that the music fills gaps in pedagogy & artistry (they can co-exist), expressive nuance, heart-filled satisfaction, and advocates for representation as needed. I write music that I am hungry to sing myself!”

Check out “Singkap Siaga”

SATB, SAB, SSAA or SSA a cappella / 3.5' / Difficulty Level 4
A gutsy and fiery piece which is inspired by the almost-extinct Malay tradition of shadow puppet theatre and its music. ▶





Carlos Cordero

Venezuelan Carlos Cordero's passion for new choral music and connecting with others has led him to create meaningful experiences and relationships. His pieces have traveled around the world, including America, Europe, and Asia, allowing him to grow as an artist and collaborate with amazing communities.

“I write choral music to create moments where we can talk and learn how to be kinder to each other.”

Check out “Let Your True Self Sing”

SATB div. a cappella / 3' / Difficulty Level 4

A fast, short and energetic journey to self-discovery! ▶

Saunder Choi

Saunder believes in music as advocacy, using the media as a platform for diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. His compositions are focused on narratives and conversations surrounding immigration, racial justice, LGBTQ+ advocacy, climate justice, and representations of his identity as a Filipino-Chinese.

“I write music to tell stories, especially underrepresented ones, and express nuanced emotions—where words fail me, music never does.”

Check out “Our Streets, A Symphony Again”

SSA, piano / 6' / Difficulty Level 3

Celebrating the city's diversity and capturing the post-pandemic anticipation and excitement of reopening. ▶



Julio Morales

Julio Morales is a choral conductor, composer, pianist and music educator from Tamaulipas, Mexico. He is the founding conductor of Vox A Cappella Band, and his music has premiered all over the world. He is also Mexico's representative composer in Interkultur's World Choir Council.

"I write music because it is how I can manifest my freedom, where my thoughts and emotions are translated into sounds with the main objective of inspiring."

Check out "Felicidad"

SATB, piano / 4' / Difficulty Level 3

This up-tempo work focuses on finding joy even in the toughest of times. ▶



Abbie Betinis

Abbie Betinis isn't new to the Graphite family, but her personal catalog is! Her music transports performers and audiences alike through storytelling, relevance, and craft. Abbie is also a co-founder of Justice Choir, a template for community singing and mobile advocacy.

"Writing music to me is a quest for transcendence —I crave getting out of my body, out of time, out of my day-to-day, and I can be sustained by that feeling for days on end. Also, I'm addicted to the thrill of solving a good puzzle."

Check out "A Blessing of Cranes"

SSAA, piano / 8' / Difficulty Level 4

From its contemplative, intimate opening measures to the climactic textural effect of the flapping of "thousands of wings," this score invites singers and audience on a memorable, healing journey. ▶



Rose Publications

Rose Publications was created to advance the programmatic legacy of The Rose Ensemble (1996-2021), which achieved an international reputation for uniting virtuosic vocal artistry with scholarly research, and connecting audiences to compelling stories of human history, culture, and spirituality from around the world.

Check out “Hawai’i Aloha”

SATB a cappella / 4’ / Difficulty Level 2

This beloved anthem honors the Hawaiian people, their land, and their history. ▶

Voces Feminae

The Voces Feminae series aims to help bend the arc of history back towards these neglected composers. Some of the music in this series is presented as performing editions of historical repertoire, while others are new arrangements. It is a joy to share these works with modern audiences and to share the message that music composition is for everyone.

Check out “Promised Land”

SATB or SATB div. a cappella / 3’ / Difficulty Level 3

This exciting new arrangement of a famous American shape note hymn is available in two different difficulty levels: moderate and advanced. ▶



Jennifer Lucy Cook

Jennifer Lucy Cook is a composer and lyricist based in Los Angeles. Jen specializes in music for the stage and screen, choral music, and pop songwriting. She earned a Master’s degree in Musical Theater Writing from Goldsmiths University in London and a Bachelor’s in Media Music from Brigham Young University.

“I approach composing and performing with story first. I prioritize communicating story and concept above everything else.”

Check out “They Are Mother”

SATB div. choir, SA solo group, and piano / 5’ / Difficulty Level 4

A joyous, playful celebration of a loving, all-inclusive creator — Mother Nature. ▶





Jeffrey Derus

Jeffrey Derus is an American composer, producer, and musician. His music has gained a worldwide presence with commissions and performances. Hailed as “powerful, dramatic, lucid” (Sonograma Magazine) and “elegant” (Voice of OC), his music is “akin to that of Holy Minimalism.” (AllMusic)

“I write music to transcribe my emotions and feelings into something tangible. Composing gives me the opportunity to create moments of self-discovery and self-healing.”

Check out *From Wilderness*

SATB, soloists, crystal singing bowls and cello / 60' / Difficulty Level 5

From landscapes to soundscapes, this work offers a moment for self-discovery and self-healing. ▶



Alex Berko

Alex Berko's music is characterized by a balance of intimacy and power, a keen sense of lyricism and emotional sensitivity, and a love of narrative. Berko's work often poses questions about our personal environments and relationships to one another.

“I write music because it is a vehicle to connection. For me, it is the best medium to share stories and ground us to the world we share.”

Check out “We Listen”

SATB a cappella / 6' / Difficulty Level 5

This important work asks “How do we listen to the world around us?” ▶



Mari Esabel Valverde

Award-winning composer Mari Esabel Valverde has been commissioned by many national organizations and has built a reputation as a singer, educator, adjudicator, and translator. Following six years as a high school classical voice instructor, she spent two years specializing in transgender voice training.

Check out “Our Phoenix”

SATB, piano, and trumpet / 4.5' / Difficulty Level 3
A lamentation, an outcry, and a rousing to a movement for equality. ▼

“I aspire to create music that emboldens people to unlearn shame, to humanize others and in the process, humanize myself.”



Roman Surzha

Shchedryk Ukrainian Choir Series



Shchedryk Ukrainian Choir Series is currently comprised of four works by Roman Surzha. These works are best known from performances by The Children’s Choir Shchedryk. The choir’s repertoire covers Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, adaptations of Ukrainian and other national folk songs, and contemporary musical compositions.

Check out “Алилуя / Alleluia”

SSA div. with optional bells / 3' / Difficulty Level 4
This work is a musical meditation: there is humility and expectation, delight and affirmation. These states flow from one to another through development, dissolving into the gentle sounds of small bells in the end. ▼

FROM PAGE TO STAGE AND BEYOND: TEACHING AND LEARNING “SELF TALK” BY JOCELYN HAGEN



“Self Talk” will be available Aug. 2024

By Beth Egger for Graphite Publishing

Beth Egger has a coffee-loving soul with a heart that beats for Ireland, choir harmonies, and the incredible chaos of middle schoolers. When she’s not sipping on a warm cup of joe, you can find Beth leading choirs or chasing after her energetic three-year-old.

In Fall 2023, I was lucky enough to prepare “Self Talk” by Jocelyn Hagen, a new song written for middle school singers. I premiered the piece in a consortium with Angelica Cantanti Youth Choirs and the Eighth Grade Choir at Scott Highlands Middle School. “Self Talk” possesses remarkable strength in its distinctive capacity to teach musical concepts, animate them in performances, and extend beyond the notes to engage impressionable middle schoolers in meaningful conversations—from page to stage and beyond.

I received a PDF of “Self Talk” in an email in early September 2023, before the other participating consortium members, so I could create supplemental teaching materials. I often create visuals, usually in Google Slides or Canva, as one of my primary teaching tools. At the middle school level, singers are still learning basic musicianship skills. For many, this might be their first time in a choir and perhaps even their first time reading a choral score. I want choral music to feel accessible at every stage of the rehearsal process, and using visuals accomplishes that goal.

While learning the score myself, I break down the musical material into its essential elements. I then take those concepts and make them into teaching slides that are simple to look at when projected on a screen, designing them so that singers can interact with the music in an enjoyable and imaginative way. I’ve discovered that this approach helps singers feel less overwhelmed and more successful right away when they finally open their own score. If you’re interested in unpacking this teaching style further, *Educating Young Singers: A Choral Resource for Teachers/Conductors* (GIA Publications) has more information on this approach.

With downloadable materials made for directors and their singers, it’s easier to teach and learn pieces like “Self Talk.” Hagen’s piece sounds tough, but is singable, layer-able, and easy when you break it apart—the secret sauce for any successful middle

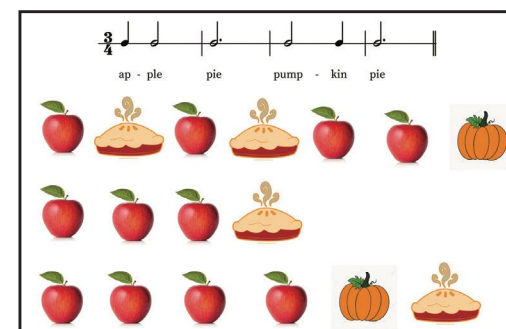
school choir song! The visual teaching slides for “Self Talk” isolate melodic material so that it can be learned in a sequential way. Then they offer ways into the layered harmonic material. The third section is dedicated to changing voices in the three-part mixed score. Using these slides to teach “Self Talk” made my singers feel less intimidated by the dissonances and rhythmic challenges when they eventually opened their scores.

Once singers have learned the notes and rhythms, they are ready to dig deeper into the emotions behind the text. In addition to teaching the musical concepts of “Self Talk,” I created a section dedicated to Social-Emotional Learning. The song offers a great chance to engage in meaningful discussions about both negative and positive self-talk and its relevance to the singers’ lives. The slides in this section define positive and negative self-talk, provide real-life examples, and offer possible solutions for overcoming negative self-talk. In addition, I embedded some short TED Talks to bring this material to life. Lastly, I brought the discussion back to the song by incorporating an activity that delves into how a performer communicates a message

to the audience in performance. Balancing the slides with both musical material and social-emotional components allows for singers to go from page to stage in a sequential and organic way.

In other Graphite pieces, I’ve created additional teaching resources for elements like body percussion and complex rhythms. The body percussion section in Hagen’s piece “One Step” looks challenging on the page, but became much easier for my students when I added a body percussion emoji chart to my teaching slides. The rhythms in Gaspar Fernandes “Xicochi” are similarly unexpected, but felt much more natural when we first felt the rhythm using apple pie and pumpkin pie iconographic symbols for the rhythms. These ways of teaching are silly, interactive, and make the music more accessible to singers.

Using a systematic teaching process to go from page to stage not only enriches our rehearsal process and performance, but also sparks something special in the audience. It’s all about creating a performance with depth that leaves a lasting impact, forging a connection that resonates beyond the music and lingers in the hearts of those who experience it. 🟢



BODY LANGUAGE

Say this text with confident body language (face, hands, feet, chest)
Say this text with weak body language (face, hands, feet, chest)

I AM STRONG
I AM STRONG
I AM STRONG
I CAN DO THIS!

How does it feel with both postures?
How can you apply this to your performance?

Musical Excerpt #3 m. 14-16+

A That's just neg - a - tive self talk

B That's just neg - a - tive self talk

1. Sing melody A and B
2. What is the same?
3. What is different?

Egger with Hagen and singers from Angelica Cantanti



OUR FAVORITE HOBBIES

Baking. Board games. Bouldering. Katerina Gimon

Learning about and cooking vegetarian food. Josh Shank

Lately, gaming. The last game I finished was *Ōkami*. Mari Esabel Valverde

Reading historical fiction. Carol Barnett

Board games, reading, paint-by-numbers! Jocelyn Hagen

Gardening. Joan Szymko

Water skiing, sailing, boating, kayaking. Ellen Gilson Voth

Kayaking. Travel. Re-designing my house in my mind. Abbie Betinis

Hiking, cooking, poetry and history, gardening, art museums, Green Bay Packer football. Linda Tutas Haugen

Board games, horror movies, video games (when my kids aren’t on!). Timothy C. Takach

I rock climb and cross stitch (not at the same time). Tracy Wong

Abbie Betinis kayaking with her daughter



Timothy C. Takach playing a board game



TAKING A GREAT HEADSHOT

8 TIPS FROM OUR COMPOSERS



Dale Trumbore's early and current headshots

Elizabeth Alexander's first and current headshots



Written by Dale Trumbore for Graphite Publishing

Given the pressure to capture your artistic aesthetic and shining personality in a single image, it's no wonder that many musicians feel stressed out about taking a good headshot. In Jocelyn Hagen's first professional photo, she says, "I was probably overly concerned with looking serious and beautiful at the same time, and I think that's really hard to do!" Elizabeth Alexander echoes the same sentiment. "As a 'woman composer' in the late 1980s I was constantly afraid I wouldn't look talented and strong and smart and attractive and approachable. No wonder my photo looked tentative and tense, with no trace of personality whatsoever."

Your headshot can influence a future collaborator's first impression of you and your music, but it doesn't have to be overly serious or staged. "People can read our credentials as composers," Ellen Gilson Voth says, "but they really want to get to know us. Our personalities, our tone of voice, the things we enjoy, the realities and setbacks we face—they are more inclined toward our music once they feel that personal connection." If a good photo can foster that connection, how do you prepare for a headshot that will capture your favorite version of yourself?

1. PICK CLOTHING IN WHICH YOU FEEL LIKE YOURSELF

Taking headshots a decade ago, I remember being so concerned with "branding" that I thought I should wear a T-shirt the same color as my logo. Unfortunately, the fit of that shirt was less than flattering, and I still

Timothy C. Takach's early headshot (L), and current headshot (R)



cringe when those photos pop up in Google images. Jeffrey Derus suggests that, above all, you choose an outfit that makes you feel most like yourself. "Wear something that makes you feel alive," he says. "It will come through in the photo as confident but relatable." Before a headshot session, choose three outfits that you think could work, ranging from something you'd wear on an ordinary day to something you'd wear to attend a concert. Practice taking informal photos in those outfits ahead of time to see if they photograph well.

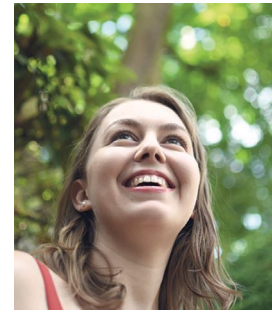
2. CHOOSE A PHOTOGRAPHER YOU'RE COMFORTABLE AROUND

For Mari Esabel Valverde, finding a photographer you trust is worth a trip. "I have lived in Texas for the past 11 years, but I had my photos done by Vero Kherian in San Francisco while I was in town for the premiere of 'Winter Ride,'" she says. To find a great photographer, ask for recommendations from friends whose headshots you love. If you're the kind of person who easily opens up and feels comfortable in front of a camera, you might be okay with any photographer. If you're a self-conscious introvert, you might feel most comfortable working with someone you know: a family friend, your artsy cousin, or even yourself. "Find a photographer who makes you laugh," suggests Alexander.

3. PRACTICE AHEAD OF TIME

You wouldn't expect sight-reading through a new piece to yield perfection, so give yourself time to practice taking a good photo before your official headshot session. "It's a dynamic shot," Tim Takach says, looking back at one of his earliest headshots, "and I love the purple, but that sly, smirking face—who was I trying to be?" Have a partner, friend or family member take photos of you inside and outdoors, and practice capturing natural-looking expressions until you can create them on-demand. Above all, try reviewing photographs of yourself with a neutral attitude. I know I sometimes look at photos of myself and only see flaws, but here, you're looking for glimpses of the best parts of your personality.

If you practice taking and reviewing pictures ahead of time, you'll be ready when the stakes are higher: when you're paying a photographer or have a limited amount of time to capture a great photo. You might still



Katerina Gimon's first and current headshots

Jocelyn Hagen's early and later headshots



feel a little uncomfortable, but just like having prepared for a concert, you'll have a goal in mind and experience behind you. You could even bring along a friend who makes you laugh, as Laura Krider recommends, so the photographer can capture you being your "relaxed, authentic self."

4. CONSIDER THE VIBE

"Don't try to just do what others do, but think: What do I want to do in this picture? What do I want to say? What do I want to show?" suggests Carlos Cordero. Ask yourself these questions ahead of the session, so all of the details—clothes, location/background, and possibly makeup and accessories—correspond to your ideal vision.

One composer I know decided they wanted to look "expensive" in their headshots, and that informed each element of their photos. For other composers, a natural setting is key. "I'm a huge fan of taking headshots in spaces that are an extension of who you are and what you do," says Katerina Gimon, who takes many of her headshots outdoors.

Ask a few trusted friends and colleagues to describe your art. There are plenty of qualities you could choose to channel in your photo, like friendly, approachable, successful, edgy, elevated, outdoorsy, artsy, playful, or thoughtful, but don't put pressure on yourself to be all of these at once. As Voth urges, you could take "some photos that capture you as focused, some imaginative, some light-hearted. Explain to the photographer the different tones you are looking for. You as the artist are steering the headshot session—not the other way around."

5. PREPARE FOR WHAT YOU WANT—AND WHAT YOU DON'T—BEFORE THE SESSION

One great way to find out what you do and don't want in your own photos is to look through the headshots of peers and professionals in your field. Note which poses you love and which decisions turn you off. For Hagen, the latter are headshots that include pets or long hair blowing in the wind. "I got a lot of laughs for having wind in my hair," she says of an early headshot.

Your photographer may place your hands under your chin or prop you up in front of a wind machine—headshot tropes that can look elevated or ridiculous. Don't let anyone talk you into doing anything that doesn't feel like you, but do embrace trying something silly if it leads to you loosening up with a genuine smile.

6. CHANNEL YOUR INNER MODEL AND FIND YOUR LIGHT

On the day of the headshot session, channel your inner Tyra Banks—not to smize, but to find the best lighting. This means literally tilting or turning your head toward the sun, a lamp, or a ring light. A good photographer will suggest you pose in a flattering way, but if you're working with a less experienced friend or taking your own headshots, you'll want to make sure your headshot literally presents you in the best possible light.

For my second round of headshots, I hired an amateur friend-of-a-friend who had just bought a good

camera. We assumed a sunny park would be an ideal spot for photos, but many of them show harsh shadows across my face. If, like Gimon, your love of nature leads you to outdoor headshots, seek a gray day or a shady spot with soft lighting.

When you're considering hiring a photographer, pay attention to their portfolio. Have they shot clients whose hair color, skin tone, and body type resemble yours, and are those photos flattering and natural, with good lighting? If you're having trouble finding a photographer, you can always take matters into your own hands.

7. DON'T BE AFRAID TO TAKE YOUR OWN HEADSHOTS

"There's a lot you can do with smartphone cameras," Valverde says. "If you go that way, experiment with lighting and have a story or statement in mind you would like to express." A great photo taken on your phone will serve you in everything except for more formal printed media like a printed magazine or newspaper article.

Borrow the best camera you can, whether that's your cousin's Canon or your partner's new iPhone. Set up a tripod or ladder and get familiar with the phone's timer function or a shutter remote. Treat this like you would any other headshot session: carve out at least two hours, so you don't feel rushed. Practice being photographed. Pick outfits ahead of time. Scout locations ahead of the session, noting how shade and shadows change throughout the day. Try to get a good night's sleep, and hydrate both the day before and the day of the session.

8. USE YOUR HEADSHOTS WELL

Once you have your headshots in hand, incorporate photographs of yourself into the "about" page of your website and anywhere else that feels relevant, like the landing page and the contact page. Make it easy for collaborators to find your headshots on your site, ideally with a link to a folder offering both portrait and landscape-orientated photos.

Above all, as Cordero recommends, try to have fun. Even professional photos can showcase the playful side of your personality. Cordero crochets headbands and often gives them as gifts; his current headshot shows him wearing one of those headbands. Just like the music you make, these photos offer another medium to show the world your beautiful self. ▶

Carlos Cordero's first and current headshots





REGINAL WRIGHT: RENAISSANCE ARTIST

Written by Dale Trumbore for Graphite Publishing

A conductor who also composes could be said to wear different hats, but not Reginal Wright—he wears different shoes. When he’s ready to compose after a day of teaching, “I take off my dress shoes that I wear to work,” Wright says, “and I put on my Crocs.” He tries to keep his conducting and composing work separate. When he’s teaching, he’s not thinking about composition. Still, his compositions draw from the internalized tones, voicings, and techniques that Wright hears as a conductor—what he calls “a bank of sounds.” He writes as if he were going to have to teach each piece to his own singers.

“If I’m conducting it, this is what I want,” he says. “I’m writing literally from the standpoint of the podium.” When I spoke to Wright for this article, he had recently started new conducting jobs with Baylor University and the Arlington Master Chorale, and he was working on two new commissions. “Reginal has an uncanny ability to make every person in his sphere feel seen and valued,” says Kristina MacMullen, Director of Choral Activities at Baylor. “He is a dynamite musician, a limitless creator, and a seasoned educator. It is impossible not to be inspired by Reginal Wright!”

From a creative and a business standpoint, Wright understands what singers and conductors find

compelling. Conductors like Jason Max Ferdinand sing his praises; Wright composes “with a freshness that can reach the hearts and minds of the next generation,” Ferdinand says. “Through his music, the choral artform will be propagated by young and yearning scholars. For this I am very grateful.”

Wright’s work combines a self-possessed mastery of prosody with lyrical, often jazz-inflected harmonies. Both are present in his piece “Forged” for TTBB chorus, which sets a text by Cara Cullen about justice and purpose. “In the smelter of public opinion and apathy,” the choir sings, “Set down your need to be right...When you set down pride and pick up humanity, you have forged a weapon.” Throughout, Wright cleverly underscores Cullen’s words with a relentless brake drum, bringing this vivid metaphor to life.

“Forged” was composed for Flower Mound High School and conductor Mark Rohwer, who calls Wright “one of the few truly ‘Renaissance’ artists that I’ve ever had the pleasure with which to work.” Rohwer notes how Wright’s compositions are informed by his conducting background, “from Title 1 Choirs in Fort Worth to award-winning ensembles in Mansfield.” While Wright’s music spans styles, Rohwer says, it’s “always so text-centered that the choirs lucky enough to sing them find that his work hits home in a profound but also personally intimate way.”

Wright has been composing choral music professionally for eight years. A self-described “band kid,” he planned to major in trombone, but finished undergraduate as a business major with a jazz piano minor. “If you’re listening to my music, you can hear the jazz lines flow

through everything,” he says. “I was in choir all through school, but band was my thing.” He grew up playing piano in church, and he’d often transform his trombone charts into piano parts.

After taking a gig accompanying a friend’s school gospel choir, Wright found that he loved working with students and returned to school for a teaching certification. He taught in Fort Worth, TX before accepting a job at Mansfield High School, where he found a terrific choral program but very few tenors and basses. The small lower-voice chorus needed music to sing that wasn’t overly simple or composed for middle schoolers. “You know what?” Wright thought. “I’ll just do it myself.” The first song he wrote for this ensemble became his “Hosanna” for TTBB chorus & piano.

At first, Wright thought of composing as a side gig. Because he was teaching so much, he was writing one song per year. “I’d start in June,” he says, “and I’d be done in August.” But in early 2020, he began to seriously consider making composition a more prominent part of his life. During the pandemic, Wright reached out to other composers and conductors, wanting to learn

more about the business and creative side of making a living writing music.

When I spoke to Wright during that time, I was struck by his ambition and drive: this was a composer willing to put in whatever it took to refine his work and get it out into the world. But even with Wright’s ambition, it hasn’t always been a smooth journey.

To learn the industry, Wright says, you have to be ready to hear “no.” You usually don’t receive an explanation

Through his music, the choral artform will be propagated by young and yearning scholars. For this I am very grateful.
- Jason Max Ferdinand



Reginal Wright (R) with Baylor University colleagues Will McLean (L) and Kristina MacMullen (C)

Reginal Wright with Baylor University Men's Choir

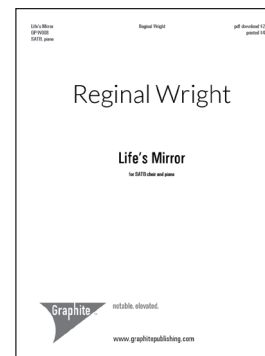


In his own composing process, Wright works at the piano and sings through each line. He also uses his phone's voice memo app to capture every idea, so nothing is lost in the process. "Inspiration comes," he says, "and then some days it just doesn't. But when you sit down and inspiration hits, record everything. Write as much as you can." He calls this "leaving breadcrumbs" for himself, so that these ideas are waiting and ready when he puts on his Crocs and returns to a composition-in-progress.

I asked Wright what advice he'd give to younger composers aspiring to a similar career path. "Ask for help," he offered, "and then, on the other side of that, help as many people as you can." Wright recommends listening and studying diverse styles of music. His studies of baroque voice-leading have helped him better understand voice-leading within his own compositions.

For conductors wondering how to encourage young

composers, Wright suggests embracing those students' current musical interests. In an interview with *Black El Paso Voice*, Wright acknowledges how adults sometimes degrade contemporary, popular styles of music. We need to encourage children to keep creating in whatever style appeals to them, he suggests, inspiring them to work in the genres that interest them, offering a holistic approach to music, and nurturing their creativity.



Just as his approach to working with young musicians embraces their strengths, Wright's music gravitates toward texts that highlight our best nature. In his piece "Life's Mirror," Wright sets a poem by Madeline S. Bridges: "Give to the world the best that you have, And the best will come back to you." In nearly all of his music, we are encouraged to embrace our own gifts. "I think the biggest thing that I want to convey is that we're all living a human experience together," Wright says. "Regardless of the way we feel about different topics, we can still show humanistic respect towards one another. That's what I want my music to do—create this sense of goodwill and brotherhood, even in times that we don't agree."

Wright's composing process has had to evolve over time, now that he's writing on commission. "The craft gets easier the more you do it," he says. "Those songs that used to take me an entire summer to write, I'm writing them in a week and a half now." As Wright strives for work-life balance, he finds ongoing fulfillment in time spent with his family, golfing, and improving his craft. "The most successful people I've seen in my life continue to grow and learn things," he notes. "I think there's always something to learn." Maybe it's not only Wright's conducting experience that lends his music its approachable strength, but his willingness to remain a student at heart. ▶

GET TO KNOW REGINAL'S MUSIC

"Life's Mirror" - Reginal Wright
Graphite Publishing
SATB, piano / 3' / Difficulty Level 4
Moving text combines with expressive lyrical writing, mixed duples and triplets, and gently changing keys to create a colorful, beautiful piece with shared melodies and lovely sonorities.

"Forged" - Reginal Wright
Graphite Publishing
TTBB, piano, perc. / 5' / Difficulty Level 4
Wright fuses elements of jazz and Western art music in percussion, piano, and low voices to create a powerful, driving work of prophetic power. The text exhorts the listener to be a participant in forging rhetorical weapons for change and justice.

"The Gift to Sing" - Reginal Wright
Graphite Publishing
SATB (div.), piano / 4' / Difficulty Level 4
A story anyone can relate to: from sadness and difficulty, singing helps us find joy and sunlight again. Wright sets the emotional stage of tension and difficulty, then relieves the tension with cascading voices calling us to share the gift of song.

"Tides" - Reginal Wright
Graphite Publishing
SATB choir, violin, viola, and piano / 6' / Difficulty Level 5
Like the opening chorus of a late Bach cantata or a Haydn mass, the instrumentation, voicing, and musical development all contribute to a piece of ambitious proportions and weight. Add a culturally relevant text, and you have a handsome opening piece to a serious concert program.



Arlington Master Chorale



Regardless of the way we feel about different topics, we can still show humanistic respect towards one another. That's what I want my music to do—create this sense of goodwill and brotherhood, even in times that we don't agree.

- Reginal Wright

MENTORSHIP AT ITS BEST

How Composers Learn from Great Collaborations

Written by Dale Trumbore for Graphite Publishing

When Graphite Publishing first started in 2006, the independent composer and publisher Stephen Paulus served as a mentor for co-founders Jocelyn Hagen and Tim Takach. “Stephen gave us amazing advice and encouragement,” says Hagen. “I know he’d be so proud to see how much Graphite Publishing has grown!”

In a music career, mentors can be found in traditional and unexpected forms. Teachers, conductors, other collaborators, peers, and even good advice filtered through one’s own internal compass can guide a musician toward success. We asked Graphite composers about their mentors, and several common themes emerged in their responses:

Great composing mentors **help you understand what is and isn’t working in a piece**. So many composers listed conductors rather than composition teachers as their most influential mentors. Isaac Lovdahl’s first professional commission came from conductor Michael Culloton shortly after he graduated from Concordia College. “I would send him drafts of the score,” Lovdahl says, “and he would respond with practical suggestions about how to make the piece more idiomatic and create a more appropriate work for the ensemble. I learned so many valuable lessons.” Martha Duncan notes that incorporating this constructive criticism gets easier with practice, urging composers to “stay humble and open to suggestions and criticisms without making it personal.”

Mentorship can continue even after a collaboration has ended, both in the literal sense—keeping in touch with a past mentor—and when a teacher’s great advice echoes throughout your creative process. Mari Esabel Valverde admits that she still finds it challenging to avoid editing a piece until after it’s done, as Victor Johnson once recommended, but his advice continues to resonate in her practice. Elizabeth Alexander’s composition teacher Jack Gallagher taught her to get at the root of why certain phrases weren’t working, but best of all, she says, “his warmth and unconditional positive regard have stayed with me all these years, as

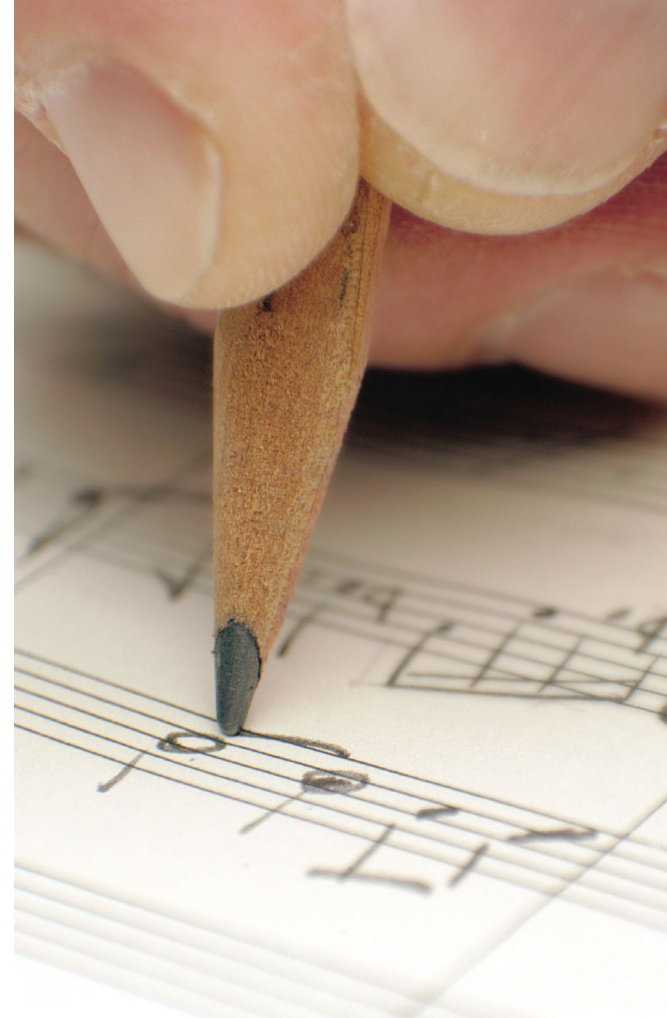
if he’s still sitting on the chair beside me saying ‘Don’t worry. You’ll figure this out.’”

Even your peers can be great mentors. We may have certain associations with the word “mentor,” imagining an older teacher or collaborator, but peers can also impart lasting lessons. For David von Kampen, casual discussions with composer friends—“smart musicians who know your tendencies and keep you honest”—are tremendously valuable. Sometimes trusted friends at your level or slightly further ahead in their careers can offer as much good advice as a teacher. “I think being able to ask questions to other composers in the field is so helpful—about composing, career, admin, work-life balance, and everything in between,” says Katerina Gimon.

As a self-made composer, Jeffrey Derus didn’t receive the typical mentorship most composers encounter within a music program. He suggests you **find mentors wherever you can, even if you don’t know them personally**. “I pulled my empowerment from ensembles and composers who shared how they progressed their creativity and career,” he says, citing Eric Whitacre’s advice to listen to everything you can, then create what you want to hear.

Great composing lessons can also come from performing in an ensemble. Both Derus and Tim Takach mentioned their experience singing in professional ensembles, which taught them in real time which choral techniques worked well and which were less successful. “I spent a lot of time in a collaborative vocal ensemble, so I was used to a feedback-rich environment,” says Takach. For Derus, singing as a professional choral artist in Choral Arts Initiative provided constant exposure to high-quality new choral music. “As artists,” Derus says, “we must observe as much as we create.”

If you’re a conductor with the opportunity to work with composers, the most important thing you can do as a mentor is **encourage composers to keep creating**. For young or inexperienced composers, too much feedback—especially if delivered with judgment or scorn—can quell a composer’s desire to persist in



this field, but the encouragement to keep going can ignite a lifelong passion. Gimon’s childhood singing teacher, composer Linda Fletcher, “encouraged me to bring the songs I was writing at home into my lessons and eventually, once I gained the courage, to enter them into local festivals and perform them at studio recitals,” Gimon says. For von Kampen, “programming pieces for concerts, placing them alongside the rest of the group’s repertoire, and taking the music seriously” are several ways a conductor can provide what he calls “the ultimate confidence boost for a young composer.”

As useful and impactful as mentorship can be, no mentor can instill one of the most important composing skills: trusting your own instincts. Learning to weed out great suggestions from unhelpful advice is a skill that’s only learned through experience. If Alexander could impart wisdom to her early-career self, she says, she’d give the same advice she repeats to herself today: “I would take more chances. I would not worry so much about what people will think about my music.”

THE WORST COMPOSING ADVICE WE’VE RECEIVED

“Don’t write for choirs. Singers are not musicians.” This was a college teacher and I was appalled to think I had still 7 more weeks in a course with someone who preached such hateful thoughts. I am grateful I decided to do the opposite, but imagine how many people listened to this person and are not writing for the voice?

- Carlos Cordero

Once a professor told me that if I ever started to cry while composing I should throw that music away, for fear it would end up being sentimental or saccharine. This is terrible advice for me for two reasons. Not only are my very very best compositions rooted in my deepest emotions, but if I were to throw away every piece that I cried while composing, I would have to throw away 80% of my entire catalog!

- Elizabeth Alexander

I was once told that you should always be thinking about whether or not a piece is marketable, and I just don’t agree. Do your work and create the things that you want to hear—the rest will fall into place.

- Isaac Lovdahl

“Compose away from the piano” (works for some, but not a pianist), “avoid parallel 5ths,” “write more accessible music”—the list goes on!

- Martha Hill Duncan

THE BEST COMPOSING ADVICE WE HAVE TO GIVE

I find it helpful to ask for advice when it comes to dealing with difficult people. You can find out if a situation was particular to you and your experience, or if this type of behavior is typical from this person. It has helped me make some difficult choices when it comes to who I want to work with.

- Jocelyn Hagen

Your best bet at getting a performance of a piece is by building and maintaining relationships with directors. It’s unlikely you’ll get a performance by just sending an email to someone you’ve never met. Not saying you shouldn’t do that also, but the best way to make sure your music is being consistently performed is by maintaining real world relationships.

- Isaac Lovdahl

Do whatever you can to get the very best performers to play and sing your music, even if they aren’t already your friends. A bad performance of a great piece means no one will know the piece is great.

- David Von Kampen

When I unpack a composition I often mention the R–V scale: repetition on one side, variety on the other. Too much repetition can dull our senses; too much variety can be disorienting. The balance we find will be different for each piece, but it’s important to seek after that balance.

- Ellen Gilson Voth

FIND REPERTOIRE AND IDEAS

FOR ALL SINGERS

Edited by Jonathan Campbell and Jocelyn Hagen

We've listened to choral conductors and put together repertoire ideas to help you find the right piece for your program. The lists are either thematic or functional for different kinds of choirs. We have you covered whether you're looking for a specific voicing or an idea to spark your imagination. Since many conductors are searching for catchy and up-tempo pieces, we've put extra love into that list this year. Happy hunting!

MUSIC OF THE COSMOS

"Comet" - Paul J. Rudoi
PJR Music
SATB a cappella / 5' / Difficulty Level 5

A journey of galactic proportions, painting the picture of a comet swirling and dancing past planets and the sun, only to be thrown out into the vastness of space.

Helios - Timothy C. Takach
Timothy C. Takach Publications
SATB a cappella / 65' / Difficulty Level 4

Positioned at the nexus of science, faith and humanity, Helios is impressive, engaging, and a beautiful addition to the canon of a cappella masterworks.

"Two Falling Stars" - Paul J. Rudoi
PJR Music
SATB or TTBB a cappella / 5' / Difficulty Level 5
In this dynamic, narrative translation of Kabir, we move beyond feeling the Divine presence and start to touch and be of the same form.

"We Are the Stars" - Joceyln Hagen
Graphite Publishing
SSATTB, string quartet / 5' / Difficulty Level 4
An intense, brilliant display of color and inspiration. "We sing with our light."

"Heaven Full of Stars" - Eric William Barnum
Graphite Publishing
SSAA a cappella / 4' / Difficulty Level 5
This dramatic setting highlights the majesty of the stars' long and eternal march across the black sky, transporting us to thoughts of heavenly realms.

"One Blue Sky" - Dale Trumbore
Dale Trumbore Publications
SSAA a cappella / 3' / Difficulty Level 3
This setting of a beautifully simple poem by Barbara Crooker uses shifting harmonies to show changing light from a blue sky to darkness to the light of the stars.

"The Mountain to the Moon" - Katerina Gimon
Katerina Gimon
SATB a cappella / 5' / Difficulty Level 4
A story of unrequited love between a mountain and their distant love, the moon. Inspired by the beauty and mystery of nature, the piece begins with the imitation of sounds of the night: loons, rustling leaves, and distant animal calls.

"How to Sing Like a Planet" - Elizabeth Alexander
Seafarer Press
TBB, piano / 4' / Difficulty Level 3
This musical "instruction manual" is as whimsical as the singing planet which inspired it.

"Silver Deity of Secret Night" - Catherine Dalton
Timothy C. Takach Publications
TTBB a cappella, TB soli, 2 speakers / 5' / Difficulty Level 4
This piece weaves together mathematics, poetry, and one of the most monumental moments in history, the launch and subsequent Moon landing of Apollo 11.

WHIMSICAL TEXTS

"Caterpillars Crawl" - Elizabeth Alexander
Seafarer Press
SA, piano / 4' / Difficulty Level 2
A look at the daunting and transformative "going out on a limb," offering clever, down-to-earth lyrics, delightful text painting, and the opportunity to fly!

"Whether the Weather" - Carlos Cordero
The Happy Choir
SAB, piano / 2' / Difficulty Level 2
The experience of sunny days, hot days, snow and rain for days. This piece is fun and easy, and with lots of character.

"The Bunny Walks" - arr. Roman Surzha
Shchedryk Ukrainian Choir Series
SSA a cappella choir / 2.5' / Difficulty Level 4
"The Bunny Walks" exemplifies how a simple folk melody and child-like innocence can create sublime music.

"A Little Brown Bird" - Hagen/Takach
Graphite Publishing
2-part, viola & cello / 2' / Difficulty Level 2
This short work delivers joy and hope in under two minutes. Fun to play and sing, you and your audience will feel lighter after a performance of this gem.

"A Respectable Bird" - Suzy Johnson
Compose Like a Girl
3-part treble, clarinet, piano / 4' / Difficulty Level 2
Historic words and personal observations, sprinkled with scientific terms and facts and drizzled with a dash of humor: a main dish for this underappreciated bird.

"The Optimist and Pessimist" - Peter J. Durow
VocalEssence Music Press
SATB a cappella / 3' / Difficulty Level 3
A wonderful opportunity for choirs to explore contrasts in musical style and engagement with the audience. Infuse some good-hearted humor into your program.

"A Red Red (Noun)" - Timothy C. Takach
Timothy C. Takach Publications
TB, piano / 3' / Difficulty Level 2
Engage your singers in this piece right away! Through any method (small groups, voting, brainstorming), fill in the missing words of this famous love poem.

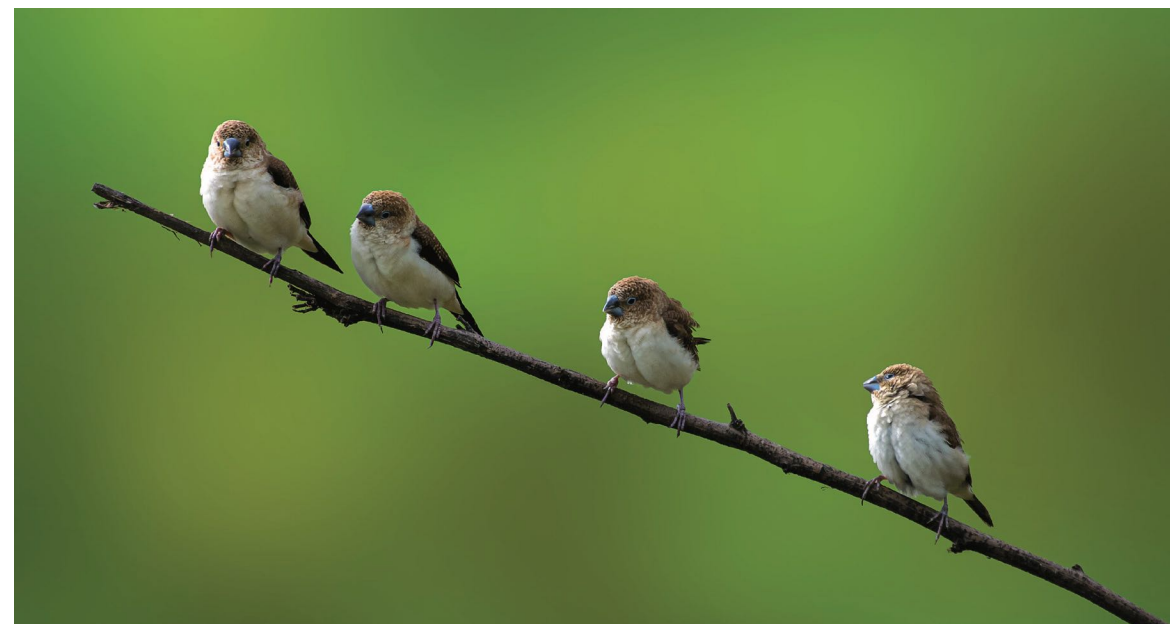
"The King of Yellow Butterflies" - Carol Barnett
Beady Eyes Publishing
SATB div. a cappella / 3' / Difficulty Level 3
Vachel Lindsay's poem is subtitled "a poem game"; the musical setting is a skillful game of tongue-twisting and deft turns for the singers.

"Same Birds" - Elizabeth Alexander
Seafarer Press
SATB a cappella / 3' / Difficulty Level 4
Unabashed word play and exaggerated diphthongs grow ever more rambunctious until they culminate into the glorious, full-bodied pronouncement: "We are here."

"Over and Over" - Jennifer Lucy Cook
Graphite Publishing
SSAA and/or TBB/synth. / 2' / Difficulty Level 3
Canonic and catchy, this combination of popular and traditional music traditions is easy to learn. "We" can come together as a communal "I" and unite in a single musical expression.

Over and over we fight, then
Over and over we fix it
More like a foe than a lover
Now you know

What about forever?
After every high and low
Never thought I'd have to learn
A way to let you go
— Jennifer Lucy Cook



CATCHY & UP-TEMPO

“God Bless the Young Folk” - Carol Barnett
Beady Eyes Publishing
SATB, piano / 3' / Difficulty Level 2

Call-and-response textures and a jazzy, syncopated piano accompaniment celebrate youth's eternal quest for “some Truer, Better Thing.”

“We Are A Circle” - Joan Szymko
Joan Szymko Music

SAA, a cappella, percussion / 3' / Difficulty Level 2
A highly rhythmic and energizing piece that honors the circle.

“Go” - Timothy C. Takach
Timothy C. Takach Publications

TB, hand drum, wood block or clapping / 3' / Difficulty Level 2
A fun, folk-like piece that turns the beat on its head.

“Ffe Mwe, Mwe Ffe” - Joan Szymko
Joan Szymko Music

SATB, SSAA, or TTBB and hand perc. / 3' / Difficulty Level 3
The energy of community coming together grows with each interwoven and layered rhythm that enters.

“Cara de Pingo (The Boy with the Wicked Face)” - Diana Syrse Valdés

VocalEssence Music Press
SAB, piano, marimba, two guitars / 3' / Difficulty Level 3
This song is based on a quasi-folk theme sung in Michoacán, originally in Purépecha.

“He’s Able!” - Christopher H. Harris
Graphite Publishing

SATB, piano / 4' / Difficulty Level 3
Rhythmic energy infuses this great gospel-style show-stopper. Repeated syncopations create excitement, and the repetition makes the piece easier to learn.

“Look Out Above” - Dessa & Jocelyn Hagen
Graphite Publishing

SATB a cappella, soli, body perc., opt. movement / 4' / Difficulty Level 3
A perfect blend of hip-hop, gospel and choral music, complete with vocal and body percussion.

We can't be stopped
they can't catch us
just like midnight on the clock:
it's all hands up— before tick goes toc,
it's just the dust we kick up,
so look out, look out, look out
look out above
cause we're coming up
look about above
there's no stopping us
We can't be stopped...
— Dessa

“Lizzie Lindsay” - Linda Tutas Haugen
Ephraim Bay Publishing

SATB or SAB, piano, opt. folk musicians / 7' / Difficulty Level 3
The setting of the chorus and verses builds in intensity throughout the movement as the story unfolds.

“Promised Land” - Matilda Durham, arr. Jennifer Lucy Cook
Voces Feminae

SATB a cappella / 2.5' / Difficulty Level 3
An exciting new arrangement of a famous American shape note hymn.

“Stand Up!” - B.E. Boykin
Graphite Publishing

SAB and piano / 4' / Difficulty Level 3
Boykin uses syncopations, fun bass lines, and rising melodic lines to express this dynamic text. The song drives to a rousing and exciting conclusion.

“Noriteo (Playground)” - GiUng Lee
Tracy Wong Series

SSA, percussion / 3' / Difficulty Level 3
Escape to the playful ambiance of Korea's playgrounds as you groove to the rhythms of this irresistible song!

“Laudamus Te” - Linda Tutas Haugen
Ephraim Bay Publishing

SATB, piano / 2.5' / Difficulty Level 3
A lively, joyful and rousing piece, with solo and contrapuntal sections: a favorite of singers! A stand-alone movement from Haugen's *Gloria*.

“Swimming” - David von Kampen
David von Kampen

SATB, piano / 3' / Difficulty Level 3
A beautiful and pulsing setting of a quietly unsettling contemporary poem.

“One Step” - Jocelyn Hagen
JH Music

SSAA or SATB, piano, body percussion / 3' / Difficulty Level 3
Full of energy with a wonderful motivational message.

“Jordan's Shore” - J.T. White
Rose Publications

SAATBB, fiddle, banjo, string bass / 4' / Difficulty Level 3
A powerful, driving arrangement singers will love.

“Star in the East” - Anonymous, arr. Jordan Sramek
Rose Publications

SSATTB a cappella / 4' / Difficulty Level 3
A resonant, hollerin' closer appropriate for Christmas or Epiphany. (The Rose Ensemble used it year-round as an encore.)

“Carmina mei cordis” - Abbie Betinis
Abbie Betinis Music Company

SATB a cappella / 6' / Difficulty Level 4
Two contrasting Latin prayers summon eternal light by day, and protection and guidance by night.

“Coffee Calling” - J. David Moore
Fresh Ayre Music

SATTB a cappella / 3' / Difficulty Level 4
An original doo-wop song as a general paean to the loving cup. Favorite line: “two hours' work in ten seconds flat/Decaf drinkers can't do that.”

“Oracle of Spring” - Mari Esabel Valverde
Mari Esabel Valverde

SATB a cappella / 2.5' / Difficulty Level 4
Madrigal-like in style, this short, up-tempo work features unusual yet colorful harmonies and would be fitting for seasonal literature depicting springtime.

“They Are Mother” - Jennifer Lucy Cook
Graphite Publishing

SATB div., SA solo group, and piano / 5' / Difficulty Level 4
The nonbinary and nonsingular mystery and grandeur of Mother Nature, featuring a blend of traditional choral vocal technique and modern pop singing.

“Boundless” - Katerina Gimón
Katerina Gimón

SSAA a cappella / 5' / Difficulty Level 4
A fun and lively work whose spirit is that of empowerment and exploration.

“Singkap Siaga” - Tracy Wong
Tracy Wong Series

SSAA, piano, percussion / 3' / Difficulty Level 4
This gutsy and fiery piece is inspired by the almost-extinct Malay tradition of shadow puppet theatre and its music.

“Aleluya!” - Jorge Córdoba
VocalEssence Music Press

TTBB a cappella / 5' / Difficulty Level 4
A rhythmically complex piece with each voice part independently layering rhythmic patterns using frequent syncopation.

“Nāmolokama Lā” - Traditional arr. Sramek, Burk, Dietrich Rose Publications

TTBB, ukulele, guitar, string bass / 3' / Difficulty Level 4
A fun-loving, swinging show piece that builds to a breathless, double-time finish.

“A Grass-Green Pillow” - Joshua Shank
Graphite Publishing

SATB, a cappella / 3' / Difficulty Level 5
This work is technically virtuosic and would be appropriate for upper-level college and professional choirs.

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OUR FAVORITE BOOKS AND PODCASTS

My favorite podcast has been “Behind the Bastards” produced by Cool Zone Media. It dives deep into the lives of the worst people in history and attempts to examine how they became that way. Definitely recommend if you're the morbidly curious type!
Issac Lovdahl

Favorite podcasts: “Huberman Lab” & “Armchair Expert.” Current book is Susan Cain's *Bittersweet*.
Tracy Wong

Favorite podcast: “How Did This Get Made?” Current book is *Super Pumped: The Battle for Uber* by Mike Isaac.
Joshua Shank

Books: Kate DiCamillo's *La prophétie de Béatryce* and Anton Treuer's *Warrior Nation*.
Carol Barnett

Podcast: “Wiser Than Me” with Julia Louis-Dreyfus.
Joan Szymko

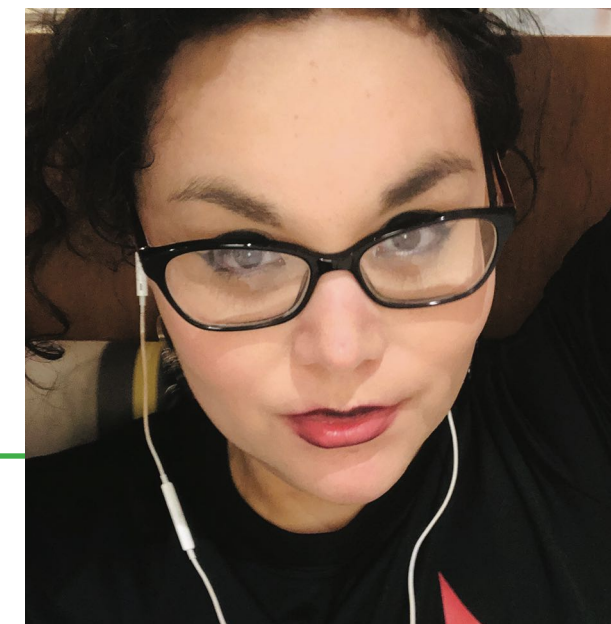
Book: *The Least of Us* by Sam Quinones.
Linda Tutas Haugen

I've just started reading and working through Rupi Kaur's *Healing Through Words*.
Katerina Gimón

I finally finished *Priory of the Orange Tree* by Samantha Shannon. In the middle of Stephen King's *Holly* and *Hell Bent* by Leigh Bardugo is next.
Timothy C. Takach

I prefer video essays over podcasts, but I would recommend “TRILLOQUY” with Loki Karuna.
Mari Esabel Valverde

Valverde listening to a podcast.



HOW WE UNWIND

I take a walk or swim.
Carol Barnett

Crochet, cuddles, Pokémon on the Switch,
and exercising.
Carlos Cordero

Tea. Walks. Petting cats.
Katerina Gimón

Hiking, spending time in nature, time with family,
gathering with friends, performing as a violinist with
the Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, good movies.
Linda Tutas Haugen

I often find that after a particularly productive
session of composing, my mind is cranked up to 11
and I can't fall asleep. I have a cup of peach tea and
watch something comedic/light on television.
Isaac Lovdahl

I usually have to get out of the flow state that
comes from composition, so I'll often play and sing
something at the piano (of which Rufus Wainwright's
oeuvre has been a recent favorite).
Josh Shank

I lie on my shakti mat.
Mari Esabel Valverde

I climb or continue my
cross stitch projects.
Tracy Wong

If I was pushing to
the midnight hour to
meet a deadline, then
some afternoon naps
following.
Ellen Gilson Voth



Haugen, hiking near Lancaster, England

Cordero crocheted these for his quartet of friends.



FLEXIBLE VOICINGS, SMALL CHOIRS & ROUNDS

“Adonai, Adonai” - Carol Barnett
Beady Eyes Publishing

A round for a cappella choir, unison to 4-part / 4' / Difficulty Level 2
An ancient prayer set to a plaintive, Middle Eastern scale that can be sung either in unison or as a canon.

“Blessing” - Joan Szymko
Joan Szymko Music

2-part (any voice combination), piano / 3' / Difficulty Level 2
Perfect for the small church choir, this poignant setting is perfect for any program or church service on the theme of gratitude.

“In natali Domini” - Anon. 15th c, ed. Sramek and Mahraun
Rose Publications

3-part mixed choir / 3' / Difficulty Level 2
This swaying 3-part Christmas motet from Renaissance Bohemia may be transposed to suit other voicings.

“De Colores” arr. Natalia Romero Arbeláez
Border CrosSing

3-part mixed choir, optional guitar / 3' / Difficulty Level 2
A beloved piece of music in the Latinx community, perfect for performing with children or adults. “De Colores” is a children’s song about the beauty of nature and color, as well as the anthem of the United Farm Workers Movement.

“Outshine” - Timothy C. Takach
Graphite Publishing

SATB, TB, SA, 2-part mixed or 3-part mixed, piano / 3' / Difficulty Level 2
Written for Conspirare’s Songs of Connection project, “Outshine” declares a willingness and commitment to act for justice and equality even in the face of dissenting voices and oppression.

“Touch Hands: A Table Grace” - Abbie Betinis
Abbie Betinis Music Company

3-part mixed, TB, SATB or SA a cappella choir / 3' / Difficulty Level 2
This warm, flexible canon passes gratitude from singer to singer.

“Gamaya” - Paul John Rudoi
Graphite Publishing

SATB choir, optional djembe / 4' / Difficulty Level 2
This unique concert round is a perfect blend of elements: minimal, mantra-like vocal material but crafted and paced in a masterful way.

“Blessed Be!” - Melanie DeMore
VocalEssence Music Press

SATB a cappella choir / 3' / Difficulty Level 3
“Blessed Be!” uses the “tree of life” metaphor to joyfully express our gratitude for human connection.

Blessed Be the Tree of Life
that grows within you and me.
Steady and true,
Rooted in love.
Shelter and peace
Below and above.
— Melanie DeMore

LIFT OUR VOICES & SING!

“How Can I Keep From Singing?” - arr. Jennifer Lucy Cook
Graphite Publishing

SATB, SAB, 2-part mixed, SA, or unison choir, piano / 4' / Difficulty Level 2
A fresh take on the traditional tune.

“Bersatu Senada” - Tracy Wong
Tracy Wong Series

SATB, piano / 4' / Difficulty Level 3
An uplifting and bilingual contemporary piece which celebrates choral singing as a way of bringing together people of different cultures and communities.

“Everyone Sang” - Isaac Lovdahl
Graphite Publishing

3-part mixed, piano / 3' / Difficulty Level 3
A sophisticated and hopeful partsong accessible to middle schoolers and adults alike.

“Song In My Heart” - Jocelyn Hagen
JH Music

SSA, piano / 4' / Difficulty Level 3
A tender dedication to a beloved music teacher.

“The Sallow Heart” - Dale Trumbore
Dale Trumbore

SATB, SA, or TB, piano / 6' / Difficulty Level 3
Celebrating the lost history of the old Irish harp tradition.

“Everything Sings” - Timothy C. Takach
Timothy C. Takach Publications

SATB, piano or string quartet / 6' / Difficulty Level 3
Celebrating the music woven into the world around us. Catchy melodies, evocative accompaniment, and a lovely round at the end.

“Those Who Wish to Sing Always Find a Song” - Elizabeth Alexander
Seafarer Press

SSA, oboe, piano / 3' / Difficulty Level 3
The joy of “tra-la-la” in nine languages!

“Let Us Sing!” - Linda Tutas Haugen
Ephraim Bay Publishing

SSA, viola or cello, bells / 2' / Difficulty Level 3
A joyful and high-energy piece based on a tune from the American shape note tradition.

“When We Sing” - Rosephanye Powell
Cantus Series - Timothy C. Takach Publications

TTBB a cappella / 3' / Difficulty Level 3
A delightful, upbeat piece extolling the benefits of singing.

“Musica Dei Donum Optimi” - Jeffrey Derus
Caribbean Blue Publishing

SSAA, piano / 5' / Difficulty Level 4
Music that celebrates the beautiful gifts God has given us.

“We Are the Song” - Joshua Shank
B&F music

SATB, piano / 6.5' / Difficulty Level 4
A lyrical song about the connectivity between all things in nature and the strength to be brave in the face of adversity.

“Let Your True Self Sing” - Carlos Cordero
The Happy Choir

SATB div. a cappella (opt. solo) / 3' / Difficulty Level 4
A fast, short, and energetic journey to self-discovery!

“Across the empty square” - Ellen Gilson Voth
Graphite Publishing

SATB, C inst., piano, or string orchestra / 5' / Difficulty Level 4
A timeless piece that explores how we can make progress against hate, fear, and isolation.



LOVE & COMMUNITY

“Lumen” - Abbie Betinis
Abbie Betinis Music Company
Unison chant, 3 part canon / 2' / Difficulty Level 2
A flexible concert selection for all skill levels. The text “Receive the light and pass it on, / I give that you may give” is appropriate throughout the year.

“No Other People’s Children” - Elizabeth Alexander
Seafarer Press
Flexible voicing: 1-4 part choir, soloists, piano (opt. congregational singing) / 5' / Difficulty Level 2
A song of reconciliation which affirms the belovedness of all people.

“We Clasp the Hands” - Carol Barnett
Beady Eyes Publishing
SSA, piano / 4' / Difficulty Level 2
An exuberant song to the loving interconnectedness of all creatures.

“Best Wishes” - Mari Esabel Valverde
Mari Esabel Valverde
SATB a cappella / 3' / Difficulty Level 2
Sung in four parts a cappella, this work is melodically and harmonically accessible, and its lyrics are adaptable to any gender.

“Help Just a Little” - William J. Kirkpatrick
Rose Publications
Solo, SATB, fiddle, guitar, string bass / 3' / Difficulty Level 2
A stirring chorus and the text’s call to kindness and charitable acts inspire this hopeful arrangement.

“Known” - Grace Becker
Compose Like a Girl
SATB, solo & piano / 4' / Difficulty Level 2
The accessible singer/songwriter style celebrates finding one’s true self with a solo, then duetting voices and finally an affirming, homophonic choral texture.

“Love Bears All Things” - Joan Szymko
Joan Szymko Music
SATB, ST soli, piano, violin / 5' / Difficulty Level 2
An expression of the enduring love that prevails when all else—words, memory, physical function—fails.

“We Are All Bound Up Together” - Joan Szymko
Joan Szymko Music
SATB or SSA, piano / 2' / Difficulty Level 2
Suffragists come to life and previously hidden voices of Black women fighting for the vote are heard.

“Take This Thread / Le fil que je suis” - Katerina Gimón
Katerina Gimón
SSA or SATB, piano, violin / 7' / Difficulty Level 3
This poignant work explores the connections or “threads” that hold us together, even and especially in times of difficulty.

Blessed Be!” - Melanie DeMore
VocalEssence Music Press
SATB a cappella / 3' / Difficulty Level 3
A celebration of life, joyfully expressing our gratitude for human connection—to generations that have come before us and those yet to come.

“Sehati (One Heart)” - Tracy Wong
Tracy Wong Series
SATB, piano, percussion / 3' / Difficulty Level 3
An uplifting piece that is rooted in acceptance and belonging.

“If I Could Give” - Jeffrey Derus
Caribbean Blue Publishing
SATB with Divisi, cello, piano / 4' / Difficulty Level 4
This work features a cinematic piano accompaniment and a soaring cello line. The melodic lines, in all parts of the chorus, deliver a harmonious wave of sound.

“Who We Are” - Jocelyn Hagen
JH Music
SATB div., piano / 5' / Difficulty Level 4
An emotional piece that allows us to see the wonder and freedom in who we are.

“You Find Yourself Here” - Dale Trumbore
Dale Trumbore
SATB, SSAA, or TTBB a cappella / 3' / Difficulty Level 4
A fast-paced piece about learning something new and carrying it with you the rest of your life. Builds to a climactic ending and works well as a concert-closer.

“Let Your True Self Sing” - Carlos Cordero
The Happy Choir
SATB div. (optional solo) a cappella / 3' / Difficulty Level 4
A fast, short, and energetic journey to self-discovery!

“In Her Image” - Katerina Gimón
Katerina Gimón
SSAA a cappella, with divisi / 5' / Difficulty Level 4
A celebration of sisterhood as well as an exploration of individuality within a collective.

“A Canticle of Blessing” - Linda Tutas Haugen
Ephraim Bay Publishing
SSAA, Violin and Tibetan Singing Bowls/Bells / 5' / Difficulty Level 4
An empowering and joyful setting of the beautiful text from St. Theresa di Lisieux including antiphonal alleluias and a rousing dance-like ending!

“The Visible World” - Dominick DiOrio
DD3 Publications
SSAATTBB / 10' / Difficulty Level 5
A powerful and gripping work that celebrates civil rights using fragments of texts from popular activists.



FAMOUS POETRY

“Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind” - Jennifer Lucy Cook
Compose Like a Girl
SSA, tambourine, hand drum / 2.5' / Difficulty Level 3
Filled with delightful surprises: percussion, some aleatoric passages, dance-like meters, and an unsentimental conclusion that “pops.”

“Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind” - Joan Szymko
Joan Szymko Music
SSAA, piano / 2.5' / Difficulty Level 3
The piano creates a rush of the wind while the voices match the many moods of the poem: somber, ironic, dancing, and finally jolly.

“At a Solemn Music” - Dominick DiOrio
DD3 Publications
SATB, organ, chimes / 10' / Difficulty Level 3
An expansive work for mixed chorus, organ, and chimes, Milton’s famous poem “Blest pair of Sirens” is at times moody, hushed, glorious, and exuberant.

“The Last Invocation” - Mary Montgomery Koppel
Compose Like a Girl
SATB divisi, piano / 4' / Difficulty Level 3
Whitman finds a new voice: a lilting, compound meter suggests a dancing spirit and the dynamic highs and lows of the piece explore the mysteries of mortality.

“Soft Stillness and the Night” - J. David Moore
Fresh Ayre Music
SATB div. / 4' / Difficulty Level 3
A sumptuous moonlit reverie saturated with warmth, contentment, and camaraderie, this elegant piece is a toast to the bonds made through making music together.

“In the Silence of the Night” - Jeffrey Derus
Caribbean Blue Publishing
SATB divisi, piano / 5' / Difficulty Level 4
The music reflects identity, perception, and mortality as the chorus calls the memories or person that we lost to come back.

“Melted into Dreams” - Carol Barnett
Beady Eyes Publishing
SSSAAATTTBBB / 6.5' / Difficulty Level 4
This setting of Shakespeare transitions from Prospero’s valedictory speech to towers and palaces that are built and dissolved within extended phrases.

“There is Sweet Music Here” - Eric William Barnum
Eric William Barnum
SATB, piano / 5' / Difficulty Level 4
With excerpts from Tennyson’s *Song of the Lotos-Eaters*, this dramatic and rich setting captures the magic of still waters, cool mosses, craggy ledges, and hanging poppies.

“The New Colossus” - Saunder Choi
Saunder Choi Music
SATB divisi / 5' / Difficulty Level 5
Choi skillfully weaves together a relentless pulse, using repetitive stuttering words to convey a powerful commentary on America’s immigration policies.

“Though the great Waters sleep” - Isaac Lovdahl
Graphite Publishing
SATB divisi, piano / 6' / Difficulty Level 5
Grapple with life’s important questions: why are we here, does our life have meaning, is there a God? A beautiful marriage of choir, keyboard, and poetry.

WORDS OF OUR TIME

“United in Song: An Anthem for Our Time” - Mari Esabel Valverde
 Mari Esabel Valverde
 solo voice or SATB a cappella / 3' / Difficulty Level 2
 This short, strophic work may be performed in a variety of ways with or without soloists or congregation. It is a response to kneeling during the National Anthem.

“Luminous Beings” - Timothy C. Takach
 Timothy C. Takach Publications
 SATB a cappella, opt. soli quartet / 4' / Difficulty Level 3
 Stunning harmonies underline Charles Anthony Silvestri's poem: we ourselves can be the light that brings love to the world.

“Hear Me Roar” - Liv Grace, arr. Grace Brigham
 Compose Like A Girl
 SSAA, A solo, body percussion / 6' / Difficulty Level 4
 A resonant, contemporary message combined with powerful writing for treble voices makes for a prophetic cry for justice and a dramatic show-stopper.

“Get Curious” - Elizabeth Alexander
 Seafarer Press
 SSAA a cappella / 4' min / Difficulty Level 4
 A rhythmically-dynamic riff on the power of curiosity to shape anger into something beautiful and transformative.

Anger can be a beautiful thing. Powerful. Transformative.
 But sometimes Anger can get the better of us.
 We can get hijacked by Anger, get rigid, get self-righteous.
 Anger can get in the way of listening.
 When that happens, it's time for us to get Curious.

Start wondering what's behind things,
 beyond the daily grind of things,
 within the intertwined of things—Get Curious.
 Unpack the reason why of things,
 the parts we can't deny of things,
 the sweet imperfect sigh of things—Get Curious.
 — Elizabeth Alexander

“Welcome Table” - Saunder Choi
 Saunder Choi Music
 SATB a cappella / 6' / Difficulty Level 4
 A poignant choral composition that reflects on the struggles of immigration and the longing for acceptance and a future where everyone is truly welcomed.

“Skin” - Mari Esabel Valverde
 Mari Esabel Valverde
 SSAA, piano / 4' / Difficulty Level 4
 A setting of Palestinian American poet Naomi Shihab Nye that addresses themes of healing, resilience, passage, and travel.

“needle & thread (from *This is How You Love*)” - Jocelyn Hagen
 Graphite Publishing
 SATB a cappella / 2' / Difficulty Level 4
 This exciting movement from the larger work is rhythmic and motivic—independent voice parts weave a tapestry of sound, stitching together two broken hearts.

“A Blessing of Cranes” - Abbie Betinis
 Abbie Betinis Music Company
 SSAA, piano / 8' / Difficulty Level 4
 Hopeful, geometric and meditative—healing the world through 1,000 paper cranes.

“Discoveries” - Grace Brigham
 Cantus Series - Timothy C. Takach Publications
 SATB or TTBB a cappella, 2 treble soli / 4' / Difficulty Level 4
 A moving piece that uplifts voices of female scientists and speaks to a common and crucial narrative of finding resilience through oppression.

The Turning - Maura Bosch
 Cantus Series - Timothy C. Takach Publications
 TTBB a cappella / 11' / Difficulty Level 4
 Working with patients in an anger management class, Bosch used their words to craft the stunning libretto: a raw, honest portrait of humanity.

CULTURAL LEGACIES

“Hawai'i Aloha” - James Granahan
 Rose Publications
 SATB a cappella / 4' / Difficulty Level 2
 Expressing nostalgia and cultural pride, Hawaiian audiences often rise, hold hands, and join in the singing of this unifying and emotionally stirring chorus.

“Nanay, Tatay (Mother, Father)” - arr. Kitbielle Pasagui
 Tracy Wong Series
 2-part treble, body percussion / 3' / Difficulty Level 2
 One of the most popular hand clapping games in the Philippines is in the Tagalog language and is played by two or more.

“¡Ayúdame!” - Carlos Cordero
 The Happy Choir
 SATB, percussion / 5' / Difficulty Level 3
 Subtitled “Venezuelan Plea for Life,” this piece is a painful journey through the crisis in Venezuela.

“RIUH! (Chaotic Joy)” - Tracy Wong
 Tracy Wong Series
 SATB, percussion / 3' / Difficulty Level 4
 Malay for “roaring, noisy, loud, boisterous, outburst,” catchy “RIUH” features improvisation by either a beatboxer or a vocal or instrumental percussionist.

“Алилуя / Alleluia” - Roman Surzha
 Shchedryk Ukrainian Choir Series
 SSAA, optional bells / 3' / Difficulty Level 4
 Humility and expectation, delight and affirmation flow from one to another through development, dissolving into the gentle sounds of small bells in the end.

“Jayjaykar!” - Shruthi Rajaseka
 VocalEssence Music Press
 SATB, percussion / 4.5' / Difficulty Level 4
 The choral tradition of India and the musical forms of Hindu bhajan groups and Sufi Islam Qawwali worship: multiple styles of communing with the Divine!

“Sofðu unga ástin mín” - arr. Jocelyn Hagen
 JH Music
 SATB, div. a cappella / 4' / Difficulty Level 4
 This modern arrangement effectively depicts the darkness of the text: sometimes sparse and always tender. An IPA of the Icelandic is included.

“En Paz” - Jesús López Moreno
 VocalEssence Music Press
 SATB, piano / 6' / Difficulty Level 4
 The character is placid and reflexive, and the homophonic weaving of voices comes close to serenity.

“Vanheim” - Johanna Malmberg
 Compose Like A Girl
 SSSAAATTTBBB a cappella / 5' / Difficulty Level 5
 A work reminiscent of Baroque masters, “Vanheim” is a thrilling achievement of vocal orchestration and a slow burn of anticipation, until the brilliant, concluding chords.

OPENERS/CLOSERS

“Everyone Sang” - Isaac Lovdahl
 Graphite Publishing
 Three-part mixed, piano / 3' / Difficulty Level 3
 “Everyone Sang” is a gorgeous partsong accessible to middle school choirs up through adults.

“I Belong in My Skin” - Timothy C. Takach
 Timothy C. Takach Publications
 SATB, piano / 3' / Difficulty Level 3
 Encouragement to seize upon a courage and determination that pushes us forward and gives us pride in our self and our bodies.

“Psalm 108” - David von Kampen
 David von Kampen
 SATB a cappella / 3' / Difficulty Level 4
 Knock your listeners back in their seat. A loud, exciting opening in six parts gives way to energetic imitative episodes and a huge finish.

“Afternoon On A Hill” - Jeffrey Derus
 Caribbean Blue Publishing
 SATB divisi a cappella / 5' / Difficulty Level 4
 “Afternoon On A Hill” is the perfect piece to brighten up any program themed around nature and beauty.

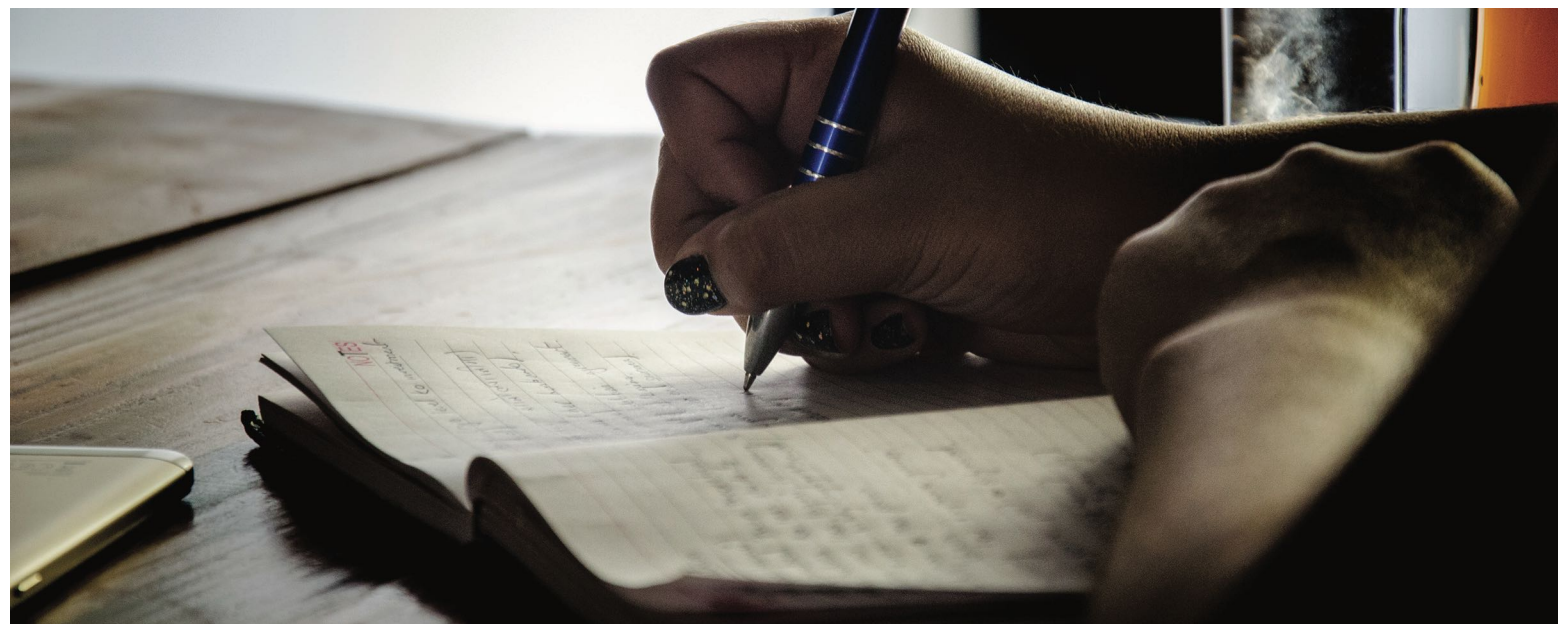
“Ma Bohème” - Joshua Shank
 B&F Music
 SATB a cappella / 2.5' / Difficulty Level 4
 A joyous celebration of a soul discovering what it wants in life. This piece would work well as a concert opener.

“Hands” - Jocelyn Hagen
 JH Music
 SSAA or SATB, 2 soloists a cappella / 5' / Difficulty Level 4
 “Hands” was commissioned by the International Federation of Choral Music for the World Choral Symposium in Barcelona, Spain (July 2017).

“Cliff Notes” - Carol Barnett
 Beady Eyes Publishing
 SATB, piano / 4' / Difficulty Level 4
 In a light-hearted style, the music mirrors Mom's emotions as she considers the various challenges her offspring might face. Perfect for spring/graduation concerts.

“Chant for Great Compassion” - Abbie Betinis
 Abbie Betinis Music Company
 SSAA, divisi, soli / 5' / Difficulty Level 4
 Three Chinese texts interwoven with traditional melodies make a swirling force of prayer and positive energy for a world that is suffering.

“Song of Praise” - Timothy Hoekman
 Timothy Hoekman Music
 SATB, soli, piano / 4' / Difficulty Level 5
 Chorus, soloists, and “everything that has breath” all join in a majestic hymn of praise: Hallelujah!



2-PART DELIGHTS!

“A Quilt of Snow” - Norwegian Folk Tune, arr. Patti Arntz
 Compose Like A Girl Series
 2-part treble, SSA or SATB, flute, piano / 4' / Difficulty Level 1
 This easy two-part song for the winter season is lyrical and fun, with a beautiful piano and flute accompaniment.

“El Barquito de Papel” - Jesús López Moreno
 VocalEssence Music Press
 2-part treble, piano / 2' / Difficulty Level 1
 The poetry, although written for children, shares a profound message of universal values.

“Lenggang Kangkung” - arr. Tracy Wong
 Tracy Wong Series
 2-part treble, hand drum, opt. flute / 4' / Difficulty Level 2
 A simple and catchy tune, suggesting the story of a person moving in a carefree manner like a water spinach dancing by the paddy field or marsh.

“She Does Not Let Go” - Timothy C. Takach
 Graphite Publishing
 2-part treble, piano / 3' / Difficulty Level 2
 This delightful song focuses on persistence, alternating between lovely unison singing and call and response partner lines.

“Standing Tall” - Ellen Gilson Voth
 Graphite Publishing
 SA, SSAA or SATB, piano / 3' / Difficulty Level 2
 This work prompts vital conversation about the fresh start each day offers; the need for deep roots to withstand seasons of promise and of struggle in our lives, often in the order we least expect; and the beauty and inherent worth of every person.



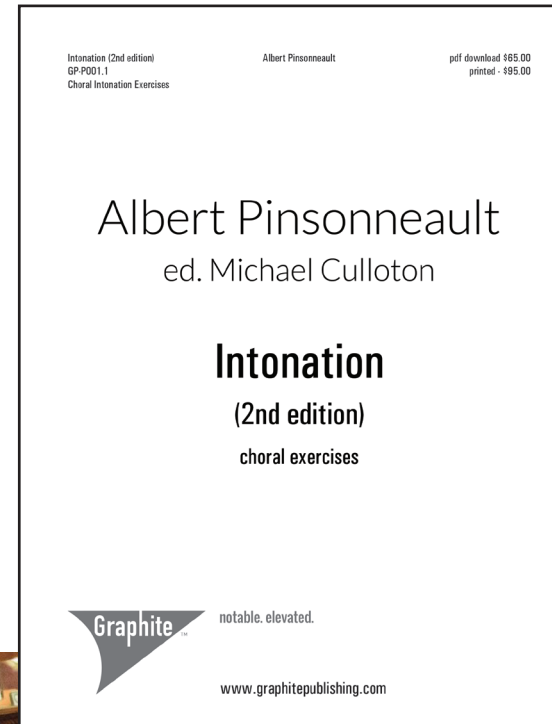
“The Young Man’s Song” - Eric William Barnum
 Graphite Publishing
 TB, piano / 4' / Difficulty Level 2
 A thoughtful piece about the beginning of love.

“Before the Bread” - Elizabeth Alexander
 Seafarer Press
 SA, SSAA, or SATB, a cappella / 2' / Difficulty Level 2
 A gracious canonic setting of a traditional English blessing.

“Half the World” - Dale Trumbore
 Dale Trumbore
 SA, TB or SATB, piano / 4' / Difficulty Level 3
 A meditation on women’s right to vote, with text by Frederick Douglass.

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INTONATION: 24 CHORAL EXERCISES

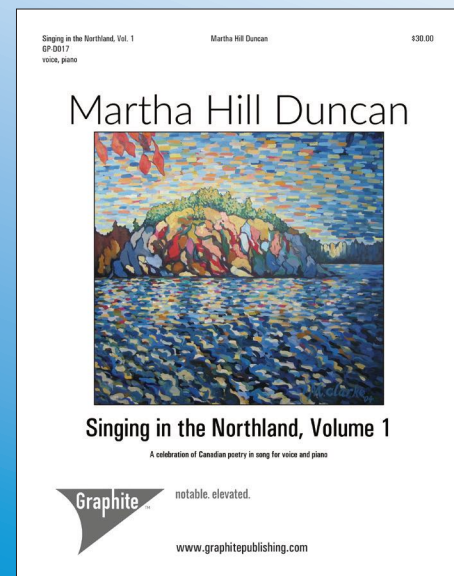


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PODCAST OUT NOW!

On the Compose Like a Girl podcast, Jocelyn shares conversations with composers as a part of her larger initiative that amplifies female-identifying composers, helps conductors diversify their concerts, and works toward more equality in music programming and commissioning.

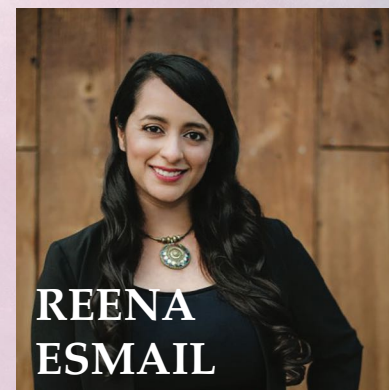
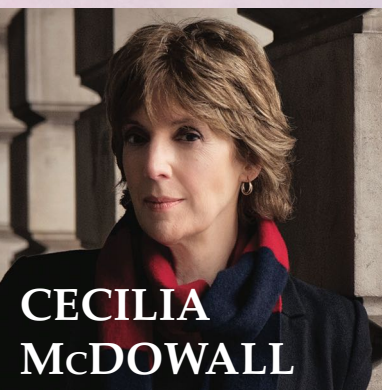
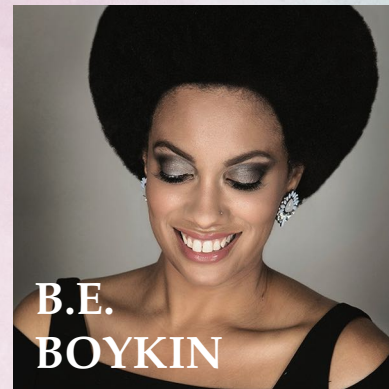


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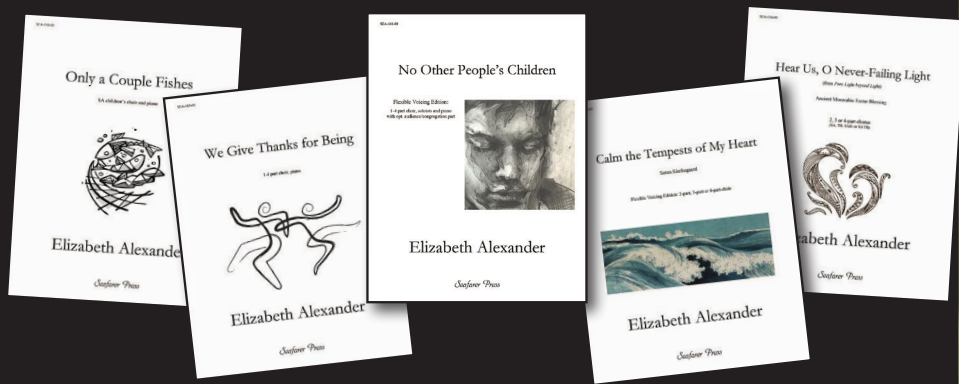
Unfashioned Creature takes inspiration from Mary Shelley’s timeless 1818 novel *Frankenstein*. Her text provides a fractured libretto, weaving together contemporary social themes: rejection, self-discovery, and love, and it forwards a complex character who seeks to find belonging.

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Libretto by Mary Shelley
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6 dancers

TimothyCTakach.com/Unfashioned



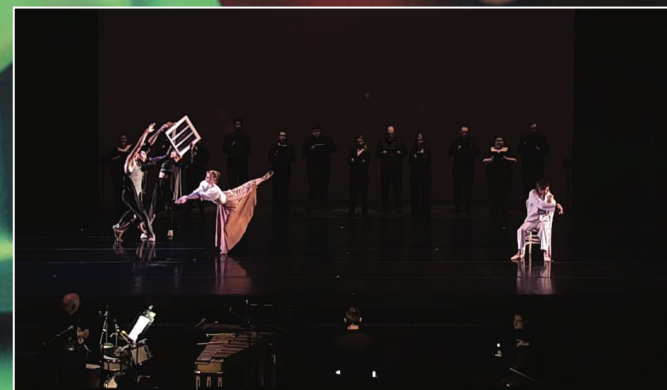
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- **Eli, Eli** / satb & ssaa, solo / cello / moderate



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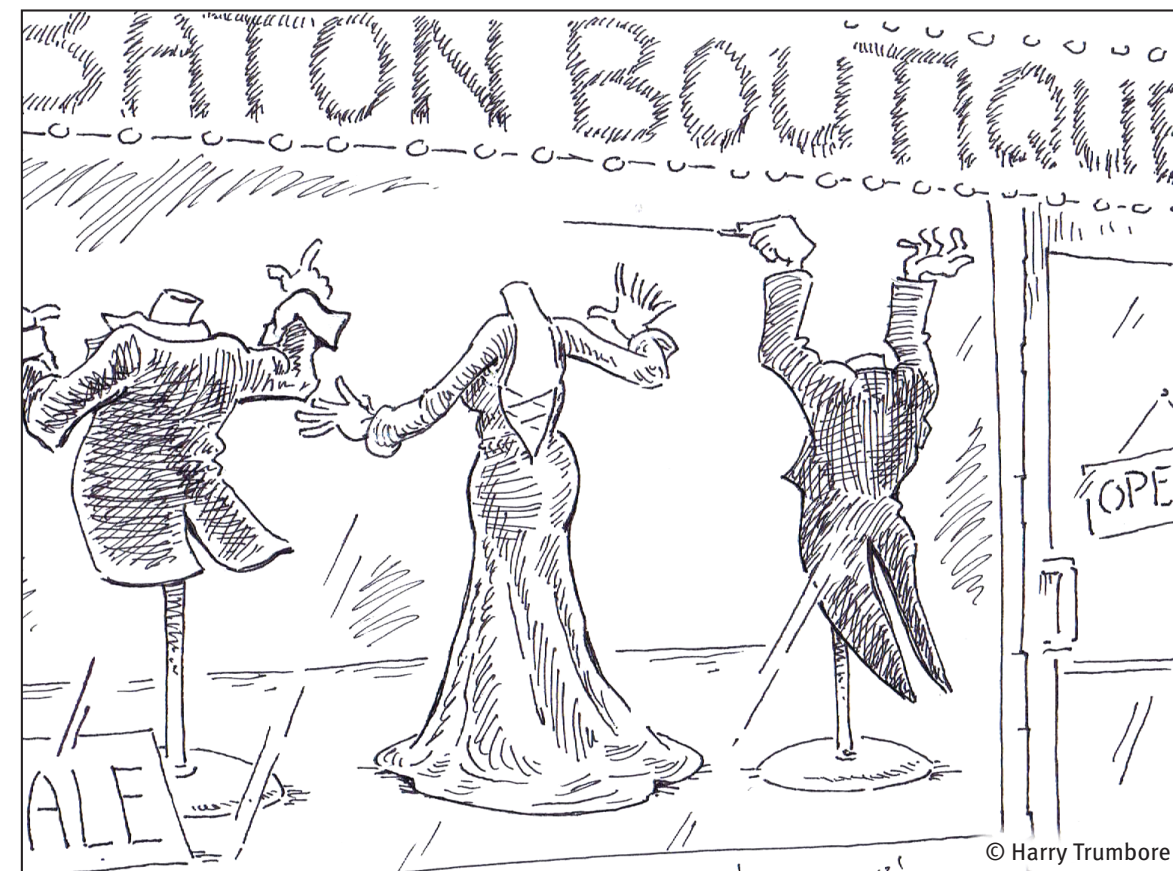
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— CHORAL JOURNAL
April 2021



Harry Trumbore is an award-winning cartoonist and the illustrator of over thirty books, including those by Car Talk stars "Click and Clack," columnist Judith Martin ("Miss Manners"), and Arianna Huffington. His artwork has also been featured on children's television shows for Nickelodeon and the National Geographic Society.



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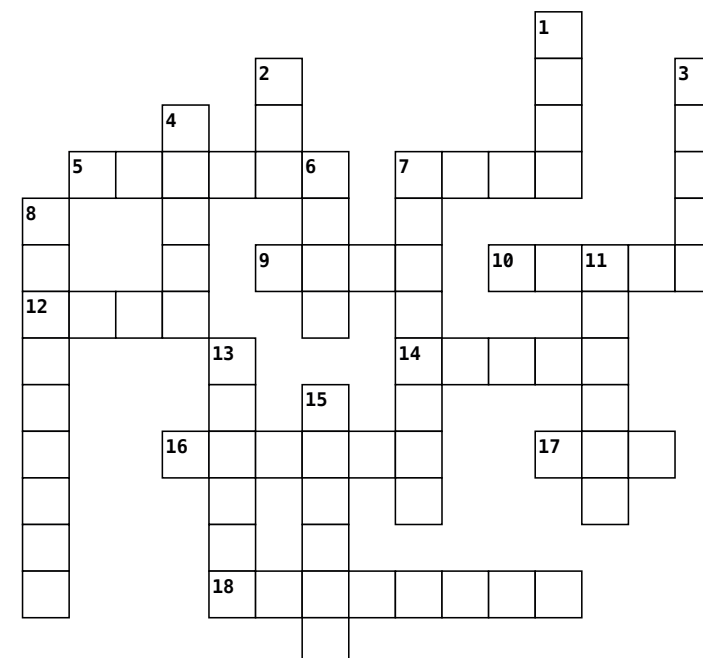
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8. Featured piece by Morales, or "happiness"
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13. Renaissance artist
15. Composer Mari _____ Valverde



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