



**JOAN SZYMKO** is widely regarded as a foremost composer of choral music in America today. She has been stirring up the pool of repertoire for women's chorus for over thirty years as both

a composer *and* conductor. Her music has been performed at every National Conference of the American Choral Directors Association since 2003. The ACDA recognized Szymko's lasting impact on the choral arts in America by selecting her as the recipient of the Raymond W. Brock Memorial Commission in 2010. Szymko directs Aurora Chorus, has served on the choral music faculty at Portland State University and as a visiting artist, has workshopped her music with choirs in a variety of educational settings across the US and in the Netherlands.

#### NOTES

Commissioning conductor Eliza Rubenstein and I agreed on the text of this commissioned work in the Spring of 2016, well in advance of the conclusion to a truly unconscionable political season. As I finished composing "Water Women" the following November, in the weeks immediately following the presidential election, giving breath and life to Alla Bozarth's words became a cathartic experience. The poet upends the notion that women with a "place at the table" best step carefully in order to protect their position: "we do not want to rock the boat, she says, mistaking our new poise for something safe". We are not safe. The "powers that be" are steering all often us into stormy seas the likes of which the human race has never seen. As an artist, and as a woman, I am of the belief that any hope for a sustainable future on this planet, is dependent not only on women having a real place "on board" but on women taking over the helm.

(NOTES, cont.)

The opening theme suggests a "rocking" feeling—not in a soothing way, as in rocking the cradle, but angular, and unsettled. Throughout, the piano accompaniment supplies a watery undercurrent supporting women's voices that alternate between powerful unison, harmonized rhythmic unison and coordinated polyphony. The watery journey culminates in a somewhat altered version of the opening theme and a final unison statement of women's "supernatural" powers.

#### ALLA RENÉE BOZARTH

Alla is a Russian, Celtic, Osage American poet, Episcopal priest, Ph.D. in performing arts and Gestalt psychotherapist soul caregiver who lives at the foot of Mt. Hood in Western Oregon. She has published 20 prose and poetry books and 4 audio albums with 14 more large poetry collections, 7 small books and 2 CDs ready for publication. Alla has written award winning poetry for over 40 years. Her poems are widely used all over the world, often in collaboration with visual artists, singers and dancers.

#### WATER WOMEN

We do not want to rock the boat,  
you say, mistaking our new poised  
for something safe.

We smile secretly at each other,  
sharing the reality that for some time  
we have not been in the boat.

We jumped or were pushed  
or fell and some leaped overboard.

Our bodies form a freedom fleet,  
our dolphin grace is power.

We learn and teach and as we go  
each woman sings— each woman's hands  
are water wings.

Some of us have become  
mermaids or Amazon whales  
and are swimming for our lives.

Some of us do not know how to swim.  
We walk on water.

Commissioned for the Orange County Women's Chorus Eliza Rubenstein, Artistic Director  
In memory of Michael E. Soderberg  
by Laurie Soderberg, Kristen Soderberg, and Bethany Soderberg Poe

# WATER WOMEN

Alla Bozarth

Joan Szymko

♩=76

*mf*

*molto rall.*

Pno

use sustain pedal accordingly

Detailed description: This block contains the piano introduction. It features a treble and bass clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 76. The music starts in 2/4 time, changes to 4/4, then 3/4, and finally 6/8. The dynamic is mezzo-forte (mf). The piece concludes with a 'molto rallentando' (molto rall.) instruction. A note at the bottom indicates to use the sustain pedal accordingly.

5

♩=40

*mf*

*poco più mosso*

S

A

We do not want to

We do not want to

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*mp*

*poco più mosso*

*mf*

Detailed description: This block contains the first line of the vocal melody and piano accompaniment. The vocal parts (Soprano and Alto) are in 6/8 time with a tempo of quarter note = 40. The piano accompaniment is in 6/8 time. The dynamic is mezzo-forte (mf). The tempo is marked as 'poco più mosso'. The lyrics are 'We do not want to'. A large green watermark 'for perusal only' is overlaid on the piano part.

8

rock the boat, you say, mis - ta - king our new poise\_\_\_\_\_ for some - thing

*mp*

*mf*

mis - tak - ing our new poise for some - thing

Detailed description: This block contains the second line of the vocal melody and piano accompaniment. The vocal parts are in 3/4 time with a tempo of quarter note = 40. The piano accompaniment is in 3/4 time. The dynamic is mezzo-forte (mf). The tempo is marked as 'poco più mosso'. The lyrics are 'rock the boat, you say, mis - ta - king our new poise\_\_\_\_\_ for some - thing' and 'mis - tak - ing our new poise for some - thing'. The piano part features a melodic line in the right hand and a harmonic accompaniment in the left hand.

11

S safe.

A safe.

dim. mp cresc. f

14

S1 We smile **for perusal only** se-cret-ly at each

S2 We smile,

A1 We smile We smile, se-cret-ly at each

A2 We smile

mp p rit. A tempo pp

mp mp pp N.B.

mp rit. A tempo pp

18 *accel.* *mp* *mf*  $\text{♩} = 82$

S1 o - ther, sha - ring the re - a - li - ty that for some time

S2 *pp* *mp* *mf*  
we smile, that for some time

A1 o - ther, we smile, that for some time

A2 *mp* *mf*  
shar - ing the re - a - li - ty that for some time

*accel.*  $\text{♩} = 82$

*mp* *mf*

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22 *f* *molto rit.*  $\text{♩} = 40$

*f* we have not been in the boat.

*f* we have not been in the boat.

*f* we have not been in the boat.

*f* we have not been in the boat.

*molto rit.*  $\text{♩} = 40$

*f*

26

S1 *mf* *accel.* 5  
We \_\_\_\_\_ jumped or were pushed or fell \_\_\_\_\_

A1 *mf* 5  
We \_\_\_\_\_ jumped or were pushed or fell \_\_\_\_\_

*mp* *accel.*

29

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S1 We \_\_\_\_\_ jumped or were pushed \_\_\_\_\_ or fell We

S2 *mf* 5 We \_\_\_\_\_ jumped or were pushed \_\_\_\_\_ or fell We

A1 We \_\_\_\_\_ jumped or were pushed \_\_\_\_\_ or fell We

A2 *mf* 5 We \_\_\_\_\_ jumped or were pushed \_\_\_\_\_ or fell We

*mf*

31  $\text{♩} = 80$  *cresc.*

S1 jumped or were pushed or fell

S2 jumped or were pushed or fell

A1 jumped or were pushed or fell

A2 jumped or were pushed or fell

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33 *f* \* pronounce "leaped" as LEHPT

and some leaped\* o - ver - board,

and some leaped\* o - ver - board, and some

and

*f* play accented notes as an "alarm"

36

and some \_\_\_\_\_ leaped o - ver - board. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ leaped o - ver - board \_\_\_\_\_ o - ver, \_\_\_\_\_ o - ver -  
some leaped o - ver - board, o - ver - board, \_\_\_\_\_  
*f*  
and some, some \_\_\_\_\_ leaped

The musical score for measures 36-38 features a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment. The piano part consists of a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: "and some \_\_\_\_\_ leaped o - ver - board. \_\_\_\_\_", "\_\_\_\_\_ leaped o - ver - board \_\_\_\_\_ o - ver, \_\_\_\_\_ o - ver -", "some leaped o - ver - board, o - ver - board, \_\_\_\_\_", and "and some, some \_\_\_\_\_ leaped". A dynamic marking of *f* (forte) is present above the fourth staff.

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39

o - ver board. \_\_\_\_\_  
board. \_\_\_\_\_  
o - ver board. \_\_\_\_\_  
o - ver - board \_\_\_\_\_

The musical score for measures 39-41 continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The piano part features a consistent eighth-note accompaniment. The lyrics are: "o - ver board. \_\_\_\_\_", "board. \_\_\_\_\_", "o - ver board. \_\_\_\_\_", and "o - ver - board \_\_\_\_\_". A dynamic marking of *mf* (mezzo-forte) is present above the piano part in measure 41. The score ends with a fermata over the final notes.

42 rit. . . . . A tempo

S1 *mp*  
Our bod-ies form a free- dom

S2 *mp*  
Our bod-ies form a free- dom

A1 *p* ————— *mp*  
Oh

A2

rit. . . . . A tempo

*p*

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45

fleet, *mf* our bod - ies, *mp* our bod - ies

fleet, *mf* our bod - ies, *mp* our bod - ies

*cresc.* *mf*  
Oh

*mp*

47 *cresc.* *f*

S1 form a free - dom fleet.

S2 *mf* *f*  
form a free - dom fleet, form a free - dom fleet.

A1 *mp* *cresc.* *mf*  
Oh Ah

A2

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50

S1 Ah

S2 *mf* *mp* *mf*  
our dol - phin grace, our dol - phin grace,

A1 *f*  
our dol - phin grace, our dol - phin

A2 *f* *mf* *mp* *mf*  
our dol - phin grace, our dol - phin grace,

53

S1 Ah

S2 *mp* our dol - phin grace *f* is pow - er.

A1 grace is pow - er, *ff* *f* pow - er.

A2 *mp* our dol - phin grace *f* is pow - er.

*legato*

*ff*

57 rit. . . . . ♩ = ♩ // ♩ = 40

*f* *mf*

62 *mf*

S We do not want to rock the boat you say mis - ta - king our new poise \_\_\_\_\_ for some-thing

A mis - ta - king our new poise \_\_\_\_\_ for some-thing

66 *accel.* ..... ♩=80

S safe. \_\_\_\_\_

A *accel.* ..... ♩=80

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69 *Meno mosso* ♩=62 *mp*

S We learn \_\_\_\_\_ (n) and as we go

A and teach and as we go

*mp* *p* *rit.* *gently* *A tempo*

*Meno mosso* ♩=62 *mp* *rit.* *gently* *A tempo*

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14 79 **Meno mosso** ♩=40

S  
wings.

A  
wings.

**Meno mosso** ♩=40

*mf*

82 ♩=60

*mp* 3 3 *mf* *mp* 3 3

some of us have be - come

Some of us have be - come mer - maids, some of us have be - come

*p* *mf*

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accel. . . . .

85

*f* *f*

mer - maids, some of us have be - come mer - maids or

mer - maids, some of us have be - come mer - maids or

accel. . . . .

88  $\text{♩} = 80$

S1  
A - ma - zon whales or A - ma - zon

S2  
A - ma - zon whales or A - ma - zon

A1  
A2  
A - ma - zon whales or A - ma - zon

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91 *ff*

whales and are swim-ming for our lives.

*ff*

whales and are swim-ming for our lives.

*ff*

whales and are swim-ming for our lives.

94 *molto rit.*  $\text{♩} = 96$

*dim.* *f* *dim.* *mp*

Unison  
97 *mf* *rit.*  $\text{♩} = 60$

S  
A  
Some of us do not know \_\_\_\_\_ how to swim.

*mf* *rit.*  $\text{♩} = 60$  *mf*

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100 *rit.* *A tempo*

S  
A  
We walk, we walk on wa - ter.

*mp* *p* *mp* *p*

**for perusal only**