

JS 039

6 minutes, 30 seconds

crisis of confidence

SATB, a cappella

Music by

Joshua Shank

Text by

Robert Ressler

Note from the composer

This work is the stand-in for the “Kyrie” of my reworking of the mass ordinaries, *there’s something i have to say*, and because that movement of the genre has such a perceptible, repetitious form, my version offers a refrain. The question that keeps returning alludes to the notion that sometimes—to quote theologian Nadia Bolz-Weber—“I have only my confession...of my own real brokenness...to offer.” By the final bars of the movement, though, a transformation has taken place.

crisis of confidence was commissioned by The Choral Project (Daniel Hughes, conductor) and received its premiere on June 24, 2023. It is dedicated to the memory of Ned Rorem.

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Performances notes

- This probably goes without saying but, when the harmonies are closer, shore up the vibrato where possible to let stuff shimmer a bit.
- Where a 3-part division occurs in the SA or TB, it’s preferable to have an even split between the voices if possible.
- Staggered breathing should be employed throughout with no apparent break in the musical line unless specified.
- You know how in the Rachmaninoff *All-Night Vigil* where he uses rests to specify only the T1 and not the T2 or only S2 and not S1, etc.? He’s trying to manage for balance, right? I thought about doing that for this piece but decided against it because it’s a lot to deal with on the page. Just be extra cognizant of the issue in all the various passages.
- Pauses are really important in this piece due to the function of the refrains. It’ll depend on the acoustic, of course, but be mindful of clearing the aesthetic and emotional space between sections. Sometimes I’ll use a caesura, sometimes just a breath, or even a grand pause. I take the differences between them to mean length of time. The basic rule to remember: *breath mark* < *caesura* < *grand pause*.

The Text

By Robert Ressler (b. 1988)

I feel full of anger.
Sometimes I hate.
I am vain, cruel, and ungenerous.

Do not come near me,
Lest you be tainted by this misery I have made.

I am unworthy, disqualified.
My heart seems to move through my life like a thresher.

How do I know what I'm doing is right?

That I am still here seems a miracle;
This world a lesson I'm not meant to understand.

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There is a place in my heart that feels so
inhospitable that no sound can ever reach it;
a grief so thick it occupies every room I step into.

How do I know what I'm doing is right?

But only fool and fanatic are certain.
That I am confused is a good sign.

My brokenness is not the final word.
I am not the worst things that I have ever done.

How do I know what I'm doing is right?

To open a window from my heart to the world.
To be startled back to the truth of who I am.
To wake up laughing at what I thought was my grief.

I long to be forgiven
and returned to myself.

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Commissioned by The Choral Project
Daniel Hughes, Conductor

crisis of confidence

(in memoriam, Ned Rorem)

Words by
Robert Ressler

Music by
Joshua Shank

quarter = 55

Musical score for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass, measures 1-4. The score is in 4/4 time with a tempo of quarter = 55. The key signature has three flats. The Soprano part is mostly rests. The Alto and Tenor parts have lyrics: "I feel full of an-ger. Some-times I hate. I am". The Bass part is mostly rests. Dynamics include *p* and *pp*. A watermark "B&F Music Joshua Shank" is visible over the score.

7 quarter = 68

Musical score for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass, measures 5-8. The score is in 3/4 time with a tempo of quarter = 68. The key signature has three flats. The Soprano part has lyrics: "How do I know what I'm do - ing is". The Alto and Tenor parts have lyrics: "vain, cruel, and un - ge-ne-rous. How do I know what I'm do - ing is". The Bass part has lyrics: "How do I know what I'm do - ing is". Dynamics include *poco rit.* and *pp*. A watermark "B&F Music Joshua Shank" is visible over the score.

14 quarter = 60

11 *no rit.*

right? _____

no rit.

right? _____

p

Do not come near me. _____ Lest you be taint-ed by this

no rit.

right? _____

p

Do not come near me. _____ Lest you be taint-ed by this

no rit.

right? _____

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22 quarter = 68

19 *mp*

How do I know what I'm do - ing is

mp

mi-se-ry I have made. _____ How do I know what I'm do - ing is

mp

mi-se-ry I have made. _____ How do I know what I'm do - ing is

mp

How do I know what I'm do - ing is

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"This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3..."

26 *no rit.* **29** quarter = 68

right? I am un - worth - y, dis - qual - i - fied. My

no rit. *p* *p*

right? I am un - worth - y, dis - qual - i - fied. My

no rit. *p*

right? I am un - worth - y, dis - qual - i - fied. My

no rit.

right?

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33 *mp* *poco rit.* *pp* *mf* **35** quarter = 68

heart seems to move through my life like a thresh - er. How do I know what I'm

mp *poco rit.* *pp* *mf*

heart seems to move through my life like a thresh - er. How do I know what I'm

mp *poco rit.* *pp* *mf*

heart seems to move through my life like a thresh - er. How do I know what I'm

poco rit. *mf*

How do I know what I'm

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37

do - ing is right? *no rit.*

do - ing is right? *no rit.* *mf* resolute That

do - ing is right? *no rit.* *mf* resolute That

do - ing is right? *no rit.*

do - ing is right? _____

This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3..."

42 quarter = 68

I am still here seems a mir-a-cle; _____ This world a les-son I'm

I am still here seems a mir-a-cle; _____ This world a les-son I'm

I am still here seems a mir-a-cle; _____ This world a les-son I'm

This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3..."

47 quarter = 55

45

molto rit. *mf* *f* *molto rit.* *lunga*

How I know what I'm do-ing is right?

molto rit. *f* *molto rit.* *lunga*

not meant to un-der - stand. How do I know what I'm do-ing is right?

molto rit. *f* *molto rit.* *lunga*

not meant to un-der - stand. How do I know what I'm do-ing is right?

molto rit. *mf* *f* *molto rit.* *lunga*

How do I know what I'm do-ing is right?"

This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3...

51 quarter = 60

p delicate; with compassion

There is a place in my heart so in - hos - pi - ta - ble

p delicate; with compassion

There is a place in my heart so in - hos - pi - ta - ble that

This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3...

55

This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3..."

no sound can e - ver reach it; a grief so thick it oc - cu - pies

no sound can e - ver reach it; a grief so thick it oc - cu - pies

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61 quarter = 55

59

This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3..."

How do I know what I'm do - ing is right?

ev - 'ry room I step in - to. How do I know what I'm do - ing is right?

ev - 'ry room I step in - to. How do I know what I'm do - ing is right?

How do I know what I'm do - ing is right?

Ah is right?

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65 quarter = 68

p icy; nimble

But on-ly fool and fa-nat-ic are cer-tain. That I am con-fused is a

But on-ly fool and fa-nat-ic are cer-tain. That

But on-ly fool and fa-nat-ic are cer-tain. That I

71

good sign. How

I am con-fused is a good sign.

am con-fused is a good sign.

poco rit. mf

poco rit. mf

poco rit.

poco rit.

77

f a tempo

do I know what I'm do-ing is right?

f a tempo

How do I know what I'm do-ing is right?

f a tempo

How do I know what I'm do-ing is right?

f a tempo

How do I know what I'm do-ing is right?

84 quarter = 80

My bro-ken-ness is not the fi-nal word.

My bro-ken-ness is not the fi-nal word.

My bro-ken-ness is not the fi-nal word.

My bro-ken-ness is not the fi-nal word.

87 *mf* *rit. to fermata* *lunga pp* *close slowly to 'n'* **G.P.**
 I am not the worst things that I have e - ver done. _____ (n)

mf *rit. to fermata* *lunga pp* *close slowly to 'n'* **G.P.**
 I am not the worst things that I have e - ver done. _____ (n)

mf *rit. to fermata* *lunga pp* *close slowly to 'n'* **G.P.**
 I am not the worst things that I have e - ver done. _____ (n)

mf *rit. to fermata* *lunga pp* *close slowly to 'n'* **G.P.**
 I am not the worst things that I have e - ver - done. _____ (n)

91 quarter = 60 *mp* *rit.* *lunga* quarter = 50 **P**
 How do I know what I'm do - ing is right? To

mp *rit.* *lunga* **P**
 How do I know what I'm do - ing is right? To

mp *rit.* *lunga* **P**
 How do I know what I'm do - ing is right? To

mp *rit.* *lunga* **P**
 How do I know what I'm do - ing is right? To

95

99 quarter = 60

o - pen a win dow from my heart to the world. How do I

o - pen a win dow from my heart to the world. How do I

o - pen a win dow from my heart to the world. How do I

o - pen a win dow from my heart to the world. How do I

mf

mf

mf

mf

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104 quarter = 55

100

know what I'm do - ing is right? To be star-tled

know what I'm do - ing is right? To be star-tled

know what I'm do - ing is right? To be star-tled

know what I'm do - ing is right? To be star-tled

rit. *lunga* *p serene*

rit. *lunga* *p serene*

rit. *lunga* *p serene*

rit. *lunga* *p serene*

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"This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3..."

106

mp

back to the truth of who I am. To wake up laugh - ing at what I

mp

back to the truth of who I am. To wake up laugh - ing at what I

mp

back to the truth of who I am. To wake up laugh - ing at what I

mp

back to the truth of who I am. To wake up laugh - ing at what I

mp

back to the truth of who I am. To wake up laugh - ing at what I

112

thought was my grief.

thought was my grief.

thought was my grief.

thought was my grief.

118

122

quarter = 50

pp How do I know what I'm do - ing is right? *rit.* *lunga* *p* I

pp How do I know what I'm do - ing is right? *rit.* *lunga* *p* I

pp How do I know what I'm do - ing is right? *rit.* *lunga* *p* I

pp How do I know what I'm do - ing is right? *rit.* *lunga* *p* I

¹²³ long to be for - gi - ven and re - turned *rit.* *lunga* to my - self.

long to be for - gi - ven and re - turned *rit.* *lunga* to my - self.

long to be for - gi - ven and re - turned *rit.* *lunga* to my - self.

long to be for - gi - ven and re - turned *rit.* *lunga* to my - self.

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