

M. E. Valverde

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E a r t h, M o t h e r :
I. I n u n d a t i o n
for TTBB chorus (div.) and percussion

About the Poet

North Carolina-based lyricist and composer, Sherry Blevins is internationally known for writing works that are emotionally honest and vulnerable. According to Hinshaw Music, "With a zest for life, a passion for music that illuminates the human condition, and a love of nature, she weaves melody with metaphor to create music that feels relevant for our time." Blevins first discovered her love of poetry as a child when in the fifth grade she won the South Carolina Lieutenant Governor's Award for Creative Writing. As an adult, she believed she had to choose between her love of music and her love of poetry, so she earned two music degrees and temporarily left creative writing behind until...on a whim, she decided to compose for an all-county choir that she would later conduct. That first piece, with her own original lyrics, called "If You Heard My Voice," was published in 2018. Since then, she has had 21 works with original text published with five different publishing houses and has won many awards and honors for her creative work. She has been commissioned by all-state and honor choirs, music educators' associations, various colleges, arts organizations, festivals, school systems, church, and community choirs. She is a member of ASCAP and the ACDA.

Earth, Mother! Hear our cries!

*The river that flows, flows in our blood.
We pulsate with forces of nature.*

*The tide that moves, moves with our breath.
We rise and swell as the ocean.*

*The water that surges, surges through our song
And sustains us in our fight.*

We flow and we rise.

We surge and we fight.

Mother Earth! Water is life.

Earth, Mother! Hear our cries!

*The fire that burns, burns like our rage.
We pulsate with forces of nature.*

*The inferno that roars, roars from our throats.
We rise and swell with shouts of protest.*

*Our torch that blazes, catches like wildfire.
We surge in our collective power.*

We rage and we roar.

We protest and we rise.

Mother Earth! Hear our cries!

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Composer's Notes

Commissioned in 2023 for the University of Michigan Men's Glee Club conducted Dr. Mark Stover in anticipation of their tour to Argentina, Brazil, and Peru, "Earth, Mother" is a setting of an original text by Sherry Blevins in a humble effort to elevate demands of South American youth climate activists. Blevins's words are, in part, informed by the following remarks:

"Committing to include youth participation in a binding way is not a favor, but a responsibility, and it's urgent that the authorities making the decisions understand this."

—Benjamín Carvajal Ponce, 26, Chilean activist

"Droughts, wildfires, and heatwaves. This cocktail awaits us summer after summer with the escalation of climate change, resulting in nothing more than intensification of all the social and economic problems Argentina is suffering."

—Bruno Rodríguez, 22, Argentine activist

"We're fighting for our Mother Earth because the fight for Mother Earth is the mother of all fights. We're fighting for our sacred lands, but we are being pursued and threatened just for protecting our own territory."

—Artemisa Xakriabá, 22, Indigenous Brazilian activist

“Earth, Mother” was composed in two movements and may be programmed as one work without pause or excerpted as two independent pieces for separate performances. Although it sung in English, this work prominently features traditional Latin American percussion. See below for details on the notation and the performance techniques of the percussion parts as well as possible instrument substitutions.

The first movement, “Inundation,” strives to express the threat of catastrophic flooding and the urgency to push for climate action. Sung in long, legato phrases that begin isolated and then converge in a unified message, “Inundation” foreshadows the chaos of excessive rains and overflowing tides. The cajón sustains the pulse in a rhythm common with the traditional Peruvian *marinera* dance. Additional textures introduced by shakers—the chajchas and the cabasa—conjure sounds of storms and rushing water. The singers’ final outcry, uttered by activists from the United States and South America alike, “Water is life,” emphasizes the reality that the survival of humanity is inextricably tied to the global climate crisis.

Performed in succession, “Wildfire” instantly contrasts “Inundation” with short, repetitive phrases sung in heavy tones. While the emergence of a flood is gradual and confounding, the urgency of a wildfire is readily palpable and violent. The Argentine bombo legüero provides a rhythmic bass, referencing the *carnavalito* dance, as the frictions of the güiro and the whips of clapping blocks resemble dry snaps of crackling wood. Following a high charged moment sung a cappella, this dynamic work culminates with an *accelerando* into a shout in unison: “Mother Earth! Hear our cries!” Perhaps abrupt, its conclusion reflects how suddenly wildfires can impact humanity for multiple generations.

Performance Notes

When preparing this work, carefully consider the size of the chorus as well as the acoustics of the performance venue to determine how to interpret dynamic markings in the score.

Chajchas: Chajchas provide a sound like rainfall. They are held suspended by hand and played with a single, firm shake. If the size of the ensemble is large, the percussionist may be asked to play at a dynamic level louder than that which is written.

Cabasa: One or more cabasas may play this part. It is played with a shake and stop pattern and punctuated with palm strikes, indicated by x-shaped noteheads. The desired sound of the palm strikes is an accent-staccato on the corresponding beats.

Cajón: The cajón is the most essential percussion part in “Inundation.” It is played in a regular rhythm common with the traditional Peruvian *marinera* dance. First, strike the *tapa* or surface of the cajón to produce a low tone, indicated by a traditional notehead; then, strike the *tapa* to produce a higher tone, indicated by a triangle notehead; and finally, on the downbeat, strike the edge to produce an accented tone, indicated by an x-shaped notehead. For a demonstration, search “marinera cajón rhythm” online.

Percussion Substitutions

Chajchas: *Rezuñas de cabra*, literally “goat hooves,” while difficult to acquire, are the chajchas’ most authentic substitute. In their stead, shakers such as maracas, a small shekere, or caxixis, played turned on their heads, could replace the rustling sounds of the chajchas.

Cabasa: The sound of the cabasa is more articulate than that of a traditional shaker. Sandpaper blocks would be an effective substitute. Otherwise, a shaker that has a clear attack such as agbe, shekere, or a metallic shaker may be employed. Shakers produced by Latin Percussion (LP) called “one shots” are excellent substitutes, but they are considered specialized to play.

Percussion Substitutions (*Continued*)

Cajón: Cajón creates a sound that is uniquely difficult to duplicate. It is practically a medium-sized wooden box that distinctly creates a low, a medium, and a high sound. Any instrument with a “woody” timbre that produces the same hierarchy of sounds would work. For example, congas could produce bass tones, open tones, and slaps that correspond with the low, medium, and high sounds respectively, and congas are typically easy to acquire. However, the technique necessary to produce these tones accurately and consistently is advanced.

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dur. = ca. 2'30"

Commissioned for the University of Michigan Men's Glee Club, Mark Stover, conductor

Earth, Mother:

I. Inundation

for TTBB chorus (div.) and percussion

Sherry Blevins

b. 1969

Mari Esabel Valverde

b. 1987

With disquiet, poco moderato ♩ = ca. 120

The musical score is arranged for a TTBB chorus and percussion. It features five vocal staves (Tenor 1, Tenor 2, Bass 1, Bass 2, and Piano for rehearsal only) and three percussion staves (Chajchas, Cabasa, and Cajón). The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 6/8. The score begins with a dynamic marking of *p* and includes a tempo marking of *With disquiet, poco moderato* with a quarter note equal to approximately 120 beats per minute. The lyrics are: "Earth, Mother! Hear our cries! Mother". The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings (*p*, *mp*). The percussion parts include specific instructions for the Cajón: "low, high, strike edge (and repeat)".

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A

Flowingly like water ♩ = ca. 160

The musical score is for a piece titled "Flowingly like water" with a tempo of approximately 160 beats per minute. It features four vocal parts: T1 (Tenor 1), T2 (Tenor 2), B1 (Bass 1), and B2 (Bass 2), along with a Cajón. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 6/8. The lyrics are: "Earth! The riv - er that flows, flows in our blood. The riv - er that flows, _____". Performance instructions include an asterisk and the word "menacingly" for the T2 and B1 parts. The Cajón part consists of a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents.

*For these three-bar phrases—mm. 5-8 and 16-19 for second tenors and mm. 7-10 and 18-21 for first basses—add voices from the first tenor and/or second bass section(s) as necessary. First basses follow second tenors to create the impression of increasing color in the sound.

9 *menacingly*

T 1
8 riv - er that flows, flows in our

T 2
8 The riv - er that flows, flows in our

B 1
flows in our blood. flows in our

B 2
p menacingly
The riv er flows in our

Cbsa. 12 8

Cajón 12 8

15 *mp* **B**

T 1 na - ture. Moth-er Earth! _____

T 2 na - ture. Moth-er Earth! _____ * *building in pressure*
The tide that moves, _____

B 1 na - ture. Moth-er Earth! _____

B 2 na - ture. _____

Cbsa. *palm strikes*

Cajón *mp*

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Musical score for voices and instruments. The score includes parts for Tenors 1 and 2 (T 1, T 2), Basses 1 and 2 (B 1, B 2), and Cajón. The music is in a key with three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a common time signature. The lyrics are: "The tide that moves with our breath. The tide that moves with our". Performance instructions include *p* (piano) and *building in pressure*. A circled number 18 is at the start of the first staff. A large watermark is overlaid diagonally across the page.

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21

T 1
8 moves, moves with our breath. We

T 2
8 tide that moves, moves with our breath. We

B 1
breath. moves with our breath. We
building in pressure

B 2
tide moves with our breath. We

Cbsa.

Cajón

24

T 1
rise — and swell as the o - cean. Moth - er

T 2
rise — and swell as the o - cean. Moth - er

B 1
rise — and swell as the o - cean. Moth - er

B 2
rise — and swell as the o - cean.

Chchs.

Cbsa.

Cajón

f *mp*

C

mf *mp* like turbulent waves

T 1 Earth! The wa - ter that surg -

mf *mp* like turbulent waves

T 2 Earth! The wa - ter that surg -

mf *mp* like turbulent waves

B 1 Earth! The wa - ter that surg -

mp *mf*

B 2 We rise and swell as the o - cean.

Chchs. *mp*

Cbsa.

Cajón

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31

T 1
8
es, surg - es through our song The

T 2
8
es, surg - es through our song

B 1
es, surg - es through our song The

B 2
mp
The wa - ter surg - es through our song *mf*

Chchs.

Cbsa.

Cajón

mf *mp* *mf* *mp*

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34 *poco a poco cresc.*

T 1
8 wa - ter that surg - es, The wa - ter that surg -

T 2
8 *mp poco a poco cresc.*
The wa - ter that surg - es, The

B 1
poco a poco cresc.
wa - ter that surg - es, The wa - ter that surg -

B 2
mp poco a poco cresc.
The wa - ter that surg - es, The

Chchs.

Cbsa.

Cajón

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T 1
8 es, The wa - ter that surg es, surg - es, surg -

T 2
8 wa - ter that surg - es, The wa - ter surg -

B 1
es, The wa - ter that surg - es, surg - es, surg -

B 2
wa - ter that surg - es, The wa - ter surg -

Chchs.

Cbsa.

Cajón

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Detailed description: This is a musical score for a choir and instruments. It features four vocal parts: Tenor 1 (T 1), Tenor 2 (T 2), Bass 1 (B 1), and Bass 2 (B 2). The lyrics are: "es, The wa - ter that surg es, surg - es, surg -" for T 1; "wa - ter that surg - es, The wa - ter surg -" for T 2; "es, The wa - ter that surg - es, surg - es, surg -" for B 1; and "wa - ter that surg - es, The wa - ter surg -" for B 2. The score includes piano accompaniment for Chords (Chchs.), Conga (Cbsa.), and Cajón. A large diagonal watermark reads "Not authorized for perusal only!".

41

T 1 *f* *mp*

T 2 *f* *mp*

B 1 *f* *mp*

B 2 *f* *mp*

Chchs.

Cbsa.

Cajón *f* *mp*

D

es through our song And sus - tains us in our fight. We

es through our song And sus - tains us in our fight. We

es through our song And sus - tains us in our fight. We

es through our song And sus - tains us in our fight. We

45

T 1
8
flow and we rise. We surge and we fight. Moth-er *mf*

T 2
8
flow and we rise. We surge and we fight. Moth-er *mf*

B 1
flow and we rise. We surge and we fight. Moth-er *mf*

B 2
flow and we rise. We surge and we fight. Moth-er *mf*

Chchs. *mp*

Cbsa.

Cajón

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49

T 1
8 Earth! Wa - ter is life. *f*

T 2
8 Earth! Wa - ter is life. *f*

B 1
Earth! Wa - ter is life. *f*

B 2
Earth! Wa - ter is life. *f*

Chchs. *f* shaken

Cbsa. *mp* *f*

Cajón *f*

opt. attacca "Wildfire"