

M. E. Valverde

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E a r t h, M o t h e r :
I I . W i l d f i r e
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.

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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

As with “Inundation,” 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.

Cl. Blocks: The clapping blocks, which provide a single conspicuously loud snap, are only ever played forte. Especially accented notes are marked *storzati* (*sfz*).

Güiro: One or more güiros may play this part. It is played with a stick in a slide and strike pattern. At square C, the percussionist plays a sustained tremolando played in a fast, steady sliding motion. In the first performance of the work, the percussionist played the tremolando using two sticks.

Bombo: The bombo legüero is the most essential percussion part in “Wildfire.” It is played in a regular rhythm common with the traditional Argentine *carnavalito* dance. First, strike the head with the *mazo* or mallet; then, strike the head with the *palo* or stick; and finally, tap the *aro* or rim with the *palo*. In this pattern, beats played with the *mazo* are the heaviest accented tones, indicated by rectangular noteheads; beats played on the head with the *palo* are indicated by slash noteheads; and rim taps are indicated by x-shaped noteheads. For a demonstration, search “ritmo de carnavalito” online.

Important: If using another instrument as a substitute for bombo legüero, cover the striking surface with a thick cloth such as a towel or scarf.

Percussion Substitutions

Cl. Blocks: A slapstick or whip may be used interchangeably with clapping blocks.

Güiro: For a most authentic sound, a wooden güiro or güiros are preferred over plastic güiros. If a güiro or güiros are not available, a metallic scraper instrument such as the Brazilian reco-reco or güira dominicana would produce a similar sound and would require a similar performance technique.

Percussion Substitutions *(Continued)*

Bombo: The bombo legüero of Argentina is traditionally constructed from a hollowed-out tree trunk covered with a cured animal hide. It may be substituted by a low tom-tom, floor tom, surdo, or small bass drum set up with the head parallel to the floor like a typical snare drum. To replicate the bombo's "woody" timbre, cover the striking surface with a thick cloth such as a towel or scarf. The bombo player must be able to easily alternate between playing with a stick and playing with a mallet—one in the left hand and the other in the right. This technique must also be used while playing any substitute instrument.

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dur. = ca. 2'

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

Earth, Mother:

II. Wildfire

for TTBB chorus (div.) and percussion

Sherry Blevins

b. 1969

Mari Esabel Valverde

b. 1987

Pleadingly, lento ♩ = ca. 46

f

Tenor 1
Earth, Moth-er! Hear our cries!

Tenor 2
Earth, Moth-er! Hear our cries!

Bass 1
Earth, Moth-er! Hear our cries! Moth-er

Bass 2
Earth, Moth-er! Hear our cries! Moth-er

Piano (for rehearsal only)

Clapping Blocks or Slapstick

Güiro(s) or Ratchet(s)

Bombo Legüero
mazo (mallet) *palo* (stick) *aro* (rim tap)
f *mf*

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A

A slow, steady march ♩ = ca. 92*mf* holding back a little

T 1
8
The fire that burns, The fire that burns, The fire that

T 2
8
The fire that burns, The fire that burns, The fire that

B 1
mf holding back a little
Earth! The fire that burns, The fire that burns,

B 2
mf holding back a little
Earth! The fire that burns, The fire that burns,

Bbo. $\frac{2}{4}$

The musical score is for a slow, steady march in 2/4 time, marked with a tempo of approximately 92 beats per minute. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The score is divided into vocal parts (T 1, T 2, B 1, B 2) and a bassoon part (Bbo.). The vocal parts have lyrics: "The fire that burns, The fire that burns, The fire that". The bassoon part has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents, marked with an 8-measure rest at the beginning.

10

T 1
8
burns, burns like our rage. We pul-sate with forc-es of
sub. p poco a poco cresc.

T 2
8
burns, burns like our rage. We pul-sate with forc-es of
sub. p poco a poco cresc.

B 1
The fire that burns like our rage. We pul-sate with forc-es of
sub. p poco a poco cresc.

B 2
The fire that burns like our The fire burns... with
sub. p poco a poco cresc.

Gro.
slide, strike, slide, strike...
p

Bbo.
sfz

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B

15

mf building in power

T 1 na - ture. The in-fer-no that roars,

mf building in power

T 2 na - ture. The in-fer-no that roars,

mf building in power

B 1 na - ture. Moth-er Earth! The in-fer-no that

f

mf building in power

B 2 nat - ture. Moth-er Earth! The in-fer-no that

Cl. Bls.

Gro.

Bbo. *mf*

21

T 1
8
The in-fer-no that roars, The in-fer-no that roars,

T 2
8
The in-fer-no that roars, The in-fer-no that roars,

B 1
roars, The in-fer-no that roars, The in-fer-no that

B 2
roars, The in-fer-no that roars, The in-fer-no that

Cl. Bls.
f

Bbo.

25

T 1
8 roars from our throats. We rise and swell with

T 2
8 roars from our throats. We rise and swell with

B 1
roars from our throats. We rise and swell with

B 2
roars from our The in-fer-no roars... with

Cl. Bls.
sfz

Gro.
p

Bbo.
sfz

sub. p *poco a poco cresc.*

sub. p *poco a poco cresc.*

sub. p *poco a poco cresc.*

sub. p *poco a poco cresc.*

sfz

p

sfz

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C

29

T 1
8
shouts of pro-test. Our torch that
mf with more ferocity

T 2
8
shouts of pro-test. Our torch that
mf with more ferocity

B 1
shouts of pro-test. *f* Moth-er Earth!

B 2
shouts of pro-test. Moth-er Earth!

Cl. Bls.

Gro.
fast, steady roll (two sticks)
mf

Bbo.
mf

34

T 1
8
blaz-es, Our torch that blaz-es, Our torch that blaz-es,

T 2
8
blaz-es, Our torch that blaz-es, Our torch that blaz-es,
mf with more ferocity

B 1
mf with more ferocity
Our torch that blaz-es, Our torch that blaz-es, Our torch that

B 2
Our torch that blaz-es, Our torch that blaz-es, Our torch that

Cl. Bls.
f

Gro.

Bbo.

39 *f* *sfz* **D**

T 1
blaz - es, catch - es like wild - fire.

T 2
blaz - es, catch - es like wild - fire.

B 1
blaz - es, Our torch that blaz - es, catch - es like wild - fire,

B 2
blaz - es, Our torch that blaz - es, catch - es like wild - fire,

Cl. Bls. *sfz*

Gro. *sfz*

Bbo. *sfz*

43

mf

T 1

8

Our torch that blaz - es, catch - es like wild - fire, like

mf *f*

T 2

8

Our torch that blaz - es, catch - es like wild - fire, like

sfz

B 1

catch - es like wild - fire. [Our torch] catch - es like

sfz

B 2

catch - es like wild - fire. [Our torch] catch - es like

Bbo.

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molto rall.

46

T 1
8
wild - fire. We surge in our col - lec - tive power.

T 2
8
wild - fire. We surge in our col - lec - tive power. —

B 1
wild - fire. We surge in our col - lec - tive power.

B 2
wild fire. We surge in our col - lec - tive power.

Bbo. || 2/4

E

A Tempo ♩ = ca. 92

mf ruthlessly

T 1
We rage and we roar. We rage and we roar.

mf ruthlessly

T 2
We rage and we roar. We rage and we roar.

mf ruthlessly

B 1
We rage and we roar. We rage and we

mf ruthlessly

B 2
We rage and we roar. We rage and we

Cl. B1s.
Cl. B2s.

Cl. B1s.
Cl. B2s.

Bbo.
mf

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56

T 1
We rage and we roar. We pro-test and we

T 2
We rage and we roar. We pro-test and we

B 1
roar. We rage and we roar. We pro-test and we

B 2
roar. We rage and we roar. We pro-test and we

Cl. Bls.

Gro.

Bbo.

sfz sub. p

sfz sub. p

sfz sub. p

sfz sub. p

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accel. al fine

60

T 1
rise. We rise. *ff*

T 2
rise. We rise. *ff*

B 1
rise. We rise. *ff*

B 2
rise. We rise. *ff*

Cl. Bls. *sfz*

Gro. *f*

Bbo. *sfz* *mf* *sfz* *mf* *sfz*

F

T 1
 Moth - er Earth! Hear our cries!

T 2
 Moth - er Earth! Hear our cries!

B 1
 Moth - er Earth! Hear our cries!

B 2
 Hear our cries!

Cl. Bls.
 Gro.
 Bbo.

Cl. Bls. *sfz*

Gro.

Bbo. *f sfz f sfz*

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