2019

MORTEN LAURIDSEN’S CHORAL CYCLE, NOCTURNES: A CONDUCTOR’S ANALYSIS

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Digital Object Identifier: https://doi.org/10.13023/etd.2019.338

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MORTEN LAURIDSEN’S CHORAL CYCLE, NOCTURNES:
A CONDUCTOR’S ANALYSIS

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DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS PROJECT

A project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in the College of Fine Arts at the University of Kentucky

By
Margaret Blair Owens
Louisville, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Jefferson Johnson, Professor of Choral Music Lexington, Kentucky 2019

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MORTEN LAURIDSEN’S CHORAL CYCLE, NOCTURNES:
A CONDUCTOR’S ANALYSIS

Morten Lauridsen is one of the most prolific composers of choral music in the 20th and 21st centuries. His characteristic tone is both readily identifiable and timeless. Works such as *Lux Aeterna*, *Les Chansons des Roses*, “Sure on this Shining Night” (from *Nocturnes*), and “O magnum mysterium” have solidified his place as one of the most important compositional voices in modern choral music.

Lauridsen’s most often-performed choral works have been individual movements excerpted from his larger choral works, due to their accessibility for advanced high school and collegiate choirs. For example, the popular “Dirait-on” comes from the cycle *Les Chansons des Roses*; “O nata lux” from *Lux Aeterna*; and “Sure on this Shining Night” from *Nocturnes*. Although “Sure on this Shining Night” is performed across the United States on a variety of concert programs from high school to professional choirs, it is rare to encounter a performance of the choral cycle *Nocturnes* in its entirety.

Morten Lauridsen composed *Nocturnes* as the Raymond W. Brock Commissioned Work for the 2005 American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) National Convention in Los Angeles. At the time of its composition, *Nocturnes* was a choral cycle consisting of three movements: “Sa Nuit d’Été,” “Soneto de la Noche,” and “Sure on this Shining Night.” Later, in 2008, he added a fourth piece, “Epilogue: Voici le Soir,” which would round out the cycle. Interesting elements of both unity and contrast weave through this choral cycle, potentially leaving the listener and performer to wonder what inspired Lauridsen to select the variety of languages, poetry, and instrumentation. Three different languages and poets are utilized throughout the cycle: “Sa nuit d’Été” in French, set to a poem by Rainer Maria Rilke, “Soneto de la Noche” in Spanish, set to a poem by Pablo Neruda, “Sure on this Shining Night” in English, set to a poem by James Agee, and “Epilogue: Voici le Soir returning to French and the poetry of Rilke. Another element of contrast exists in the instrumentation, with three out of the four pieces utilizing the piano. “Soneto de la Noche,” however, is a cappella with much more pervasive vocal divisi than the other pieces, making it the most
technically difficult piece in the cycle. The variety of languages and difference in level of
difficulty is one reason that this song cycle is not widely performed in its entirety.

This monograph draws on background information regarding other similar works by Lauridsen, information regarding the poetry of these works, and musical analysis of these works, in addition to an interview with Lauridsen himself.

KEYWORDS: Lauridsen; Nocturnes; Choral Cycle; Sure on this Shining Night; Soneto de la Noche; Sa Nuit d’Été
MORTEN LAURIDSEN’S CHORAL CYCLE, NOCTURNES: 
A CONDUCTOR’S ANALYSIS

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05/01/2019
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To me, this project represents a culmination of lifelong inspiration, influences, and assistance from the following people –

my parents, Tom and Leigh Blair, who impressed upon me the importance of education and the value of hard work from a young age,

my siblings - Jennie, Maria, and Andrew - whose friendship and constant competitive drive and success in their respective careers have always been a source of motivation,

my students, who have cheered me on at every step of the way,

my dear friend and vibrant music educator, Katie Cook, who has been a steadfast colleague and source of strength, reason, and laughter,

all the music teachers from my formative years -
   Pat Keller, my elementary school music teacher,
   Debbie Lanham, my summer camp music instructor
   Dr. Janet Bass Smith and Alesia Speer, my piano teachers,
   Chuck Bolton, church pianist and worship leader,
   Richard Suggs, church choir director
   Brenda Stuart, my junior high school chorus teacher,
   Patricia Beresford, my high school voice teacher,
   Dr. Susan Davenport and Dr. Tim Sexton, my high school choir directors,

my husband, Michael Owens, who has continued to push me and keep me focused on my academic path and has loved me through thick and thin,

my son, Oliver Owens (now 21 months old), who has been the greatest joy of my life,

For the best teachers, directors, and mentors around, who continued my love of music in college and beyond, who taught me what it means to be a servant leader and a consummate professional, whose work and love of the choral profession I strive to model every day -
   Dr. Lori Hetzel and Dr. Jefferson Johnson.

Thank you.
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CHAPTER 1

NOCTURNES: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

“And for those of you that have an inner song to share, be that song in the form of poetry or dance or music, sculpture, or singing, to fulfill that calling is not an easy task. Persevere, and by doing so, you will change lives.”

-Morten Lauridsen

Morten Lauridsen is one of the most prolific composers of choral music in the 20th and 21st centuries. His characteristic style is both readily identifiable and timeless. Works such as octavos “O magnum mysterium” and “Sure on this Shining Night” as well as larger works such as Les Chansons des Roses and Lux aeterna have carved out his place in music history as one of the most important compositional voices in 20th and 21st century choral music. In Nick Strimple’s book, Choral Music in the Twentieth Century, he writes, “The contrapuntal interplay of melodic elements combined with the constant realignment of a few vertical sonorities – a Renaissance technique – results in the undulating and glistening textures for which Lauridsen’s music is justly famous.”

While Lauridsen’s most-performed choral works have been individual octavos, due to their accessibility for high school and collegiate choirs, these octavos often exist as part of a larger work. For example, the popular “Dirait-on” comes from the cycle Les Chansons des Roses; “O nata lux” from Lux aeterna; and “Sure on this Shining Night” from Nocturnes. Although “Sure on this Shining Night” is performed across the United States...

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States on a variety of concert programs from high school to professional choirs, it is rare to encounter a performance of the choral cycle Nocturnes in its entirety.

Morten Lauridsen composed Nocturnes as the Raymond Brock Commissioned Work for the 2005 ACDA National Convention in Los Angeles. At the time of its composition, Nocturnes was a choral cycle consisting of three pieces: “Sa Nuit d’Été,” “Soneto de la Noche,” and “Sure on this Shining Night.” Later, in 2008, Lauridsen added a fourth piece, “Epilogue: Voici le Soir” that would round out the cycle. Interesting elements of both unity and contrast weave through this choral cycle, potentially leaving the listener and performer to wonder what inspired Lauridsen to select such a variety of languages, poetry, and instrumentation. Three different languages and poets are utilized throughout the cycle: “Sa nuit d’Été” in French, set to a poem by Rainer Maria Rilke, “Soneto de la Noche” in Spanish, set to a sonnet by Pablo Neruda, “Sure on this Shining Night” in English, set to a poem by James Agee, and “Epilogue: Voici le Soir” returning to French and the poetry of Rilke. Another element of contrast exists in the instrumentation, with three out of the four pieces utilizing the piano. “Soneto de la Noche,” however, is a cappella with much more pervasive vocal divisi than the other pieces, making it the most technically difficult piece in the cycle. Perhaps the variety of languages and varying level of difficulty is one reason that this song cycle is not widely performed in its entirety.

The poets of Lauridsen’s Nocturnes – Rainer Maria Rilke, Pablo Neruda, and James Agee – are vital to the understanding of this choral cycle as a whole. Morten Lauridsen himself possesses a deep love for literature and poetry. Text selection is very
important to him, as it provides the initial inspiration for musical meter and rhythm. Even the overall style of the music is rooted in the poetry. Lauridsen stated:

My passion second to music is poetry. I read and study it constantly – every day. It is a fundamental part of my life. I have profound admiration for poets who seek deeper meanings and truths and are able to express themselves elegantly through the written word. Consequently, it has been a natural development for me as a composer to wed these two passions and to set texts to music.2

1.1 Review of Related Literature

Other than Milburn Price’s article in the Choral Journal (Dec. 2004) about the choral cycle being premiered as the 2005 Raymond Brock commissioned composition at the ACDA National Convention in Los Angeles, no scholarly material has been written solely about Lauridsen’s Nocturnes. There are, however, many scholarly resources regarding Lauridsen’s compositional style and specific research on his larger works, such as Lux aeterna, notably Tim Sharp’s article “Morten Lauridsen’s Lux aeterna - A Conductor’s Considerations” from Choral Journal (Feb 2003).

The collection of three compact discs entitled, Dialogues: Musical Conversations between Composers and Conductors involves a dialogue between Morten Lauridsen and Paul Salamunovich that is facilitated by James Jordan. This resource provides unique and interesting insight into Lauridsen’s compositional process, especially including his extra-musical inspiration that comes from art and poetry. Lauridsen has been described by music historian Nick Strimple as a “mystic.”3 This recording of conversations, as well as


3 Strimple, 247.
the DVD documentary *Shining Night: A Portrait of Composer Morten Lauridsen* provide more evidence of that claim than any book or article could reveal. Through these recordings, it has become apparent how thoroughly Lauridsen immerses himself in poetry, art, and nature in order to compose his music.

In delving into the poetry of Pablo Neruda, who is the source for the poetry of “Soneto de la Noche,” (the second movement of *Nocturnes*) resources such as Stephen Tapscott's translations of Neruda's *Cien Sonetos de Amor* (100 Sonnets of Love), which include side-by-side English translations of the original Spanish text, have proved to be an invaluable resource in analyzing Neruda’s poetry. During the filming of the documentary *Shining Night*, Lauridsen recites the Neruda text for *Soneto de la Noche* from memory as he is reflecting on the calming, meditative influence of being amidst nature and near the sea at his summer haven in the San Juan Islands:

> When I die, I want your hands upon my eyes:  
> I want the light and wheat of your beloved hands  
> to pass their freshness over me one more time:  
> I want to feel the gentleness that changed my destiny.

> I want you to live while I wait for you, asleep,  
> I want your ears to still hear the wind,  
> I want you to smell the scent of the sea we both loved,  
> and to continue walking on the sand we walked on.

> I want all that I love to keep on living,  
> And you whom I loved and sang above all things  
> To keep flowering into full bloom,

> So that you can touch all that my love provides you,  
> So that my shadow may pass over your hair,  
> So that all may know the reason for my song.⁴

⁴ Nicholas Lauridsen. Translation, as quoted in front cover of “Soneto de la Noche.” (from *Nocturnes*). New York: Peermusic Classical, 2005.
The fact that Lauridsen specifically recalls this text reveals that he is very personally attached to this poem, as if he could have written the poem himself. For this reason, the study of Neruda’s life and poetry provides profound insight into Lauridsen’s *Nocturnes*, particularly “Soneto de la Noche.”
CHAPTER 2

THE COMPOSER: MORTEN LAURIDSEN

Morten Johannes Lauridsen is notable for his tenure in Los Angeles as professor of composition and later department chair at University of Southern California’s Thornton School of Music. He served as Composer-in-Residence of the Los Angeles Master Chorale from 1995-2001, while Paul Salumunovich was conductor. “O magnum mysterium,” “Dirait-on” (from Les Chansons des Roses), “O nata lux” (from Lux aeterna) and “Sure on this Shining Night” (from Nocturnes) have become some of the best-selling choral octavos ever distributed by Theodore Presser, in business since 1783. Nearly two million copies of Lauridsen’s musical scores have been sold. His principal publishers are Peermusic Classical (New York/Hamburg) and Faber Music (London). Lauridsen’s choral catalogue was purchased by Southern Music Company in 2006 and is now distributed by the Hal Leonard Corporation.

Lauridsen’s earliest works, such as Madrigali: Six “Fire-songs” on Italian Renaissance Poems and some movements of the Mid-Winter Songs were often quite dissonant and even occasionally atonal. In later works, he became more influenced by the melodic contour of Gregorian chant and the way in which the music and the text enhance one another. His post as composer-in-residence with the Los Angeles Master Chorale with conductor Paul Salamunovich, whose expertise is chant, assisted in facilitating this evolution.

Early in the compositional process of each of his pieces, Lauridsen notates a rhythmic transcription of his reading of the poem, denoting which syllables are stressed, either through raised pitch, length, or inflection, which syllables are shorter, and how the
poem would fit best into an accurate musical notation. Upon chanting the rhythm of “Onata lux,” “Dirait-on,” or “Sure on this Shining Night,” one notices that unaccented syllables of text are given short notes off the beat, while stressed syllables appear on downbeats or with lengthened notes, or both.\(^5\)

In terms of chordal structure, Lauridsen himself has referred to his use of added tones as “added-note triads,” in which the interval of a 2\(^{nd}\) or a 4\(^{th}\) is added to the triad. However, the added tones are simply for color, not for function. Whereas an added 9\(^{th}\) chord would typically, in common practice harmony, need to be resolved downward by stepwise motion, Lauridsen’s added 2\(^{nd}\) exists in close relation to the other pitches in the chord and does not feel the necessary pull toward resolution. It merely exists, hanging in the air, without push or pull in one direction or another. In an interview for the Los Angeles Times, Lauridsen comments, “I have used a lot of major seconds and ninths, intervals I regard as ‘warm.’”\(^6\) These harmonic seconds color much of Lauridsen’s body of work (Example 1).

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In his dissertation on the music of 21st century choral composer, Eric Whitacre, Andrew Larson created a method for analyzing modern choral music called “textural density variation,” in which he purports that by increasing the number of pitches in chords, the composer creates momentum. The similarities of Whitacre and Lauridsen have been noted by many, and Larson’s theory of replacing or taking precedence over traditional harmonic function with the analysis of textural density variation is an intriguing principle.7 Lauridsen often adds one non-chord tone per triad, but as he builds toward a musical climax, he creates more dense chords, often infusing added fourths into the mix.

Although his style is notable for its lush harmonic sonorities, it is of interest that rhythm is a consistent element in Lauridsen’s work in that he often uses an eighth note as the constant pulsing unit, and the note values are elongated as a phrase nears its end, sometimes with an additional marking of ritardendo or molto ritardendo. Often, he writes a more rhythmically involved melody while the other voices maintain the steady pulsing foundation. This concept is especially evident in “Dirait-on” and “Sure on this Shining Night,” which are two of Lauridsen’s most popular works. The majority of Lauridsen’s works are in a slow tempo, and those in a quicker tempo contain slow sections or multiple fermati and ritardandi to slow the forward motion that often comes with the rhythmic motion of constant eighth notes. Thus, it is apparent that he prefers for the sound to linger in the air a little longer, especially at cadences, and the conductor should allow for rubato to be infused into each phrase. In order to convey this to conductors and performers, Lauridsen writes many rhythmic and tempo alterations. Within the first twenty-two measures of “Soneto de la Noche” (the second movement of Nocturnes), Lauridsen indicates eight rhythmic or tempo alterations.

When I was afforded the privilege of interviewing Morten Lauridsen via telephone, he commented on “Sure on this Shining Night” in reference to the fluidity of the melodic line:

Now the thing with “Shining Night” - what there needs to be always (because this stuff comes right off the Broadway stage) - is a lot of flexibility with the tempo. I play that opening very freely. It’s different every time I do it. It absolutely drives me nuts when I hear . . . (sings a robotically strict version of the opening of “Sure on this Shining Night”). And it just shows that the conductor and the pianist have no sense of where this thing begins. It should be flowing, it should be give and take, a push and pull all the way through. I find this stuff also in performances of “O magnum
mysterium” and “Lux aeterna” where people don’t understand that it comes straight out of chant and there should be a flexibility. There are no eighth notes. There is just a line, and that line is very elastic and flexible.8

Lauridsen often sets a long, somewhat disjunct melody on one syllable (most notably “SHI-ning” of “Sure on this Shining Night” and “ad-mi-RA-bi-le” of “O Magnum Mysterium”), which creates a challenge of legato singing over a long phrase with wide leaps. However, Lauridsen knows the boundaries of the human voice well and is careful not to demand anything beyond its limits. In order to reveal the greatest beauty from Lauridsen’s music, a choir must be capable of executing these long lines with a supported, legato tone, and a conductor must be committed to attaining a linear shape from each phrase.

The DVD documentary Shining Night: A Portrait of Composer Morten Lauridsen provides insight into the composer’s process and his preferred habitat for composing, which is on Waldron Island, a small community in the San Juan Islands of the Pacific Northwest. There, he is secluded from modern distractions and surrounded by nature, which is the source of much of the inspiration for his music.9

In his settings of Latin texts, Lauridsen often bases melodic material on chant-like expression of text, which has an unmetered and rhythmically flexible structure that works well in his style. However, Lauridsen’s melodies are not derived directly from chant material. In his most famous choral octavo, “O magnum mysterium,” the quarter note is the constant note value, whereas the eighth note has taken precedence in many other

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8 Lauridsen interview by author, October 17, 2017, Appendix A.

works. It is possible that this may be a nod to Tomás Luis de Victoria’s setting of “O magnum mysterium” (circa 1572) and the longer note values of Renaissance choral music.

In Carol Krueger’s interview with Morten Lauridsen, which is documented in her dissertation on Lauridsen’s Les Chansons des Roses, Lauridsen revealed that he dedicated “O magnum mysterium” to Paul Salamunovich because he feels the motet reflects Salamunovich’s expertise on chant and choral tone. Lauridsen stated, “I’m writing to [Salamunovich’s] strength; that’s why all of this material is right out of chant, even though I never quote chant directly.”

Text, chant, and techniques of Renaissance music are of primary importance to Lauridsen and are central to his compositional style.

As revealed in the author’s email correspondence with Todd Vunderink, Director of Peermusic Classical, “O magnum mysterium” has been Lauridsen’s most successful octavo, at over half a million copies sold in the United States alone since its release in 1995. “O magnum mysterium” was commissioned by Marshall Rutter, former President of the Los Angeles Master Chorale, in honor of his wife, Terry Knowles. The Los Angeles Master Chorale presented the world premiere of the work on December 18, 1994, conducted by Paul Salamunovich.

In the recording Dialogues: Musical Conversations between Composers and Conductors, Lauridsen states that O Magnum was the most difficult piece he had ever

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11 Todd Vunderink, Director of Peermusic Classical, email correspondence, Feb 1, 2019.
written and that he lost much sleep over it. He wanted to make a profound impact in the most understated way possible. So, he used simple harmonic structure with vocal lines conjunct in contour, which are inspired by Renaissance chant. He also employed the Renaissance technique of “fauxbourdon,” which is known to heighten the intelligibility of the text. Throughout the piece, root position chords only exist in passing. Lauridsen mentions that each phrase in *O Magnum* is a unit, and there is an elasticity to them, similar to waves, which are inspired by his time spent at his composing haven on Waldron Island.

Another one of Lauridsen’s most popular choral octavos is “Dirait-on,” written in 1993. Of the five movements in the *Chansons des Roses* cycle, Lauridsen composed “Dirait-on” first, although it falls last in the set. He initially wrote it as an encore piece in *chanson populaire* style and then crafted the remaining movements around it. “Dirait-on” is the only movement in the cycle that is accompanied by piano. The cycle is in arch form, not unlike Bach’s *Jesu meine Freude* and Brahms’s *Requiem*, which are well-known extended works in arch form. Lauridsen has previously said that he has a particular affinity for the works of Brahms, who “very successfully achieves the delicate balance between head and heart.”

When explaining the ideal piece for the 2005 Brock Commission, for which *Nocturnes* was composed, Dr. Gene Brooks, the Executive Director of ACDA at the time,

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mentioned “Dirait-on” to Lauridsen as an example of the type of composition they wanted. They didn’t want something that would get performed once and sit on a shelf. They wanted something accessible and that anyone could perform, like “Dirait-on,” which led Lauridsen to consider “Sure on this Shining Night,” which he had already begun composing.

In addition to Rainer Maria Rilke’s vast output of poetry in German, he also wrote nearly 400 poems in French. Les Chansons des Roses is set to the French poetry of Rilke, as well as “Sa Nuit d’Été” and “Epilogue: Voici le Soir” of Nocturnes. In A Companion to the Works of Rainer Maria Rilke, the authors wrote “Rilke’s poetry is so well-received in English-speaking countries . . . because it vividly exposes feelings and ideas that transcend the bounds of culture and language, revealing his congenial familiarity with universal human experiences.” Since Lauridsen is also known for this same transcendence of cultural boundaries, it is not surprising that he is repeatedly drawn to the poetry of Rilke for his compositions.

CHAPTER 3

THE POETS: RILKE, NERUDA, AND AGEE

Amongst the three poets that Lauridsen selected for *Nocturnes* – Rainer Maria Rilke, Pablo Neruda, and James Agee - there does not seem to be a common thread, which leads one to believe that the poetry of *Nocturnes* provides an element of contrast rather than unity. Rilke hailed from Central Europe, Neruda from South America, and Agee from the United States, and the poems that Lauridsen used for his *Nocturnes* are in French, Spanish, and English, respectively. All three authors lived during the early part of the 20th century: Rilke from 1875-1926, Neruda from 1904-1973, and Agee 1909-1955. During an interview with the author, Lauridsen referred to the poems as “night poems,” which is his definition of a poetic nocturne. In the book *A Poet’s Glossary*, Edward Hirsch stated:

> One could make a good international anthology of the modern poetic nocturne, which is frequently a threshold poem that puts us in the presence of nothingness or God - it returns us to origins - and stirs poets toward song … The nocturne became a European musical type in the nineteenth century, a pensive, moody instrumental piece especially suitable for playing at night, and thereafter poetic nocturnes frequently evoke the melancholy feelings or tonalities of piano nocturnes … Nocturnes are often poems of sleeplessness, the cry of the solitary and bereft ensouled in poetic form.¹⁵

This definition particularly brings to mind the piano nocturnes of Frédéric Chopin, notable for their the melancholy, mystery, and singable melodies.

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Rainer Maria Rilke was born as an only child to Josef and Sophia Rilke on December 4, 1875 in Prague, which was then a part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. Rilke’s father, Josef, was a military man and hoped that his son would be as well.\textsuperscript{16} Rilke’s mother, Sophia, was the daughter of a wealthy merchant and grew up in a large Baroque mansion in Prague. Upon marrying Josef, she expected that her lifestyle would continue to launch her into the upper echelon of Prague society. Unfortunately, this high expectation was unattainable for a military man, and it caused a rift in their marriage, which ended in divorce while Rilke was away at military academy as an adolescent.

Rilke’s mother’s poetic influence on her son was tremendous. She recited Friedrich von Schiller’s long ballads to Rilke, and she urged her son to memorize, recite, and copy poetry. Rilke’s first poem of record was at age nine. It was a verse to his parents on their eleventh wedding anniversary. Although Rilke was primarily raised by his mother, Rilke’s father instilled in him “genuine feelings for chivalry and military glory,”\textsuperscript{17} which would appear later as themes in his stories and poems.

Rilke’s life involved several recurring themes that stemmed from various relationships. For a person who only lived a few weeks past his fifty-first birthday, and spent most of those years on a search for solitude, Rilke lived a very interesting yet


\textsuperscript{17} Ralph Freedman, \textit{Life of a Poet: Rainer Maria Rilke} (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1966), 10.
complicated life. His life spanned from 1875 to 1926, a time of unprecedented change in politics, philosophy, culture, the arts, and also in the map of the European continent.  

Rilke was on a constant search for a livelihood. Most poets of this time also had a career that paid their bills, but Rilke had none. Instead, he lived as a glorified vagabond, relying on loans from his publisher, Insel Verlag, and the good will of patrons and friends. Rilke’s friends, romantic interests, and patrons seemed to share the vision of Rilke as someone who had a rare and important gift that must be brought to fruition by whatever means necessary.

At age 21, the young Rilke had already begun to make a name for himself with the literary circles in Prague, but he was ready to escape from his provincial life in Prague and from his family. Rilke set off for Munich in 1896, where he intended to study art history. This move to Munich opened the doors of lofty artistic circles that would assist in sustaining his craft for a lifetime. In Munich, Rilke met a very important person who would shape his future drastically – Lou Andreas-Salomé (1861-1937), a Russian novelist and essayist, who would become his confidante, mentor, and muse. Salomé was fourteen-years Rilke’s senior, and he viewed her as the epitome of strength and creativity.

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19 Brodsky, 27.
Salomé became one of the first female psychoanalysts and was a student and colleague of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939).

In the spring of 1899, Salomé introduced Rilke to her homeland of Russia when they took a two-month long visit to Moscow and St. Petersburg. While there, Rilke met many famous artists and writers, including Leo Tolstoy whose influence is seen in Das Buch vom lieben Gott und anderes (Stories of God), and he immersed himself in the language, the history, the traditions, and the folklore. After this journey, Rilke had a period of astounding productivity, resulting in Das Buch vom lieben Gott und anderes (Stories of God), Die Weise von Liebe und Tod des Cornet’s Cristoph Rilke (The Song of the Love and Death of Cornet Christoph Rilke), and the sixty-six poems that make up the first part of Das Stundenbuch (The Book of Hours). During these times of heightened productivity, Rilke felt that he was a vessel into which some divine power was pouring artistic inspiration.

In 1902, Rilke moved to Paris to write a commissioned monograph on famous sculptor, Auguste Rodin (1840-1917). From 1902 to 1906, he served as Rodin’s personal secretary and correspondent, traveling with him, and learning from him. This time marked a very productive period of composition, publishing his monograph of Auguste Rodin in 1903, Das Stunden Buch (The Book of Hours) in 1905, followed by Neue

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*Gedichte (New Poems)* in 1907, and the semi-autobiographical *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (*The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*) in 1910. From Rodin, Rilke learned the necessity of what he called *Schauen*, or active looking. The art of seeing into the reality of an object became a hallmark of Rilke’s works, highlighted by his development of *Dinggedicht*, the thing-poem, which he developed when writing *Neue Gedichte* (1907-08). In these poems, each object, whether it is a rose, a church window, or an animal, unfolds before the reader’s eyes, like layers of paint and shadows in a painting. Simultaneously, the art of words, the poem, becomes a *Kunstding*, an art object in itself. This approach is widely viewed as Rilke’s contribution to modern poetry.

### 3.2 The French Poems

In addition to his vast output of poetry in German, Rilke also wrote over 400 poems in French. He had only written twenty-eight French poems before 1922, which is the year he completed his masterpiece, *Duino Elegies*. Basking in the relief of having finished the elegies, Rilke composed all fifty-six of his *Sonnets to Orpheus* in just eighteen days. Rilke composed the remaining 372 of his French poems between 1922 and his death in 1926. Although it is commonly known among Rilke scholars that *Sonnets to Orpheus* was completed in the period immediately following his completion of *Duino*

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22 Prater, 102.

23 Freedman, 213.

24 Brodsky, 29.
Elegies, it is also likely that this massive output of French poetry was born of the same celebratory outpouring of creativity.⁰⁵

The most accomplished translator of Rilke’s work, A. Poulin, Jr., wrote, “In only four years Rilke wrote more poems in a language foreign to him than most poets write in their native tongue during an entire lifetime. Such a large body of work…surely warrants our serious attention, especially when the more we read them the more we realize the extent to which they are an integral part of Rilke’s canon and probably have been overlooked by many critics to date.”⁰⁶

Rilke’s French poems are closely related, in style and subject, to his Sonnets to Orpheus, offering Rilke’s “elegance of attitude, grace of diction, above all his wealth and generosity of creation, that effortless heaping of image upon image, invention upon invention, loveliness upon loveliness.”⁰⁷ The French poetry is generally lighter, more playful, and more joyous than the rest of Rilke’s oeuvre.⁰⁸

In 1923, Rilke became ill and traveled all over France with friends and family seeking answers and relief. Although he had suffered since 1923, it was not until weeks before his death in December of 1926 that he was diagnosed with an incurable and very

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⁰⁶ A. Poulin, Jr., preface to *The Complete French Poems of Rainer Maria Rilke*, translated by A. Poulin, Jr., (Minneapolis, MN: Graywolf, 1979), xii.

⁰⁷ W.D. Snodgrass, foreword to *The Complete French Poems of Rainer Maria Rilke*, translated by A. Poulin, Jr. (Minneapolis, MN: Graywolf, 1979), ix.

painful form of leukemia. Although he endured immense suffering, Rilke refused all painkillers, because he wanted to remain aware and fully himself. He lived his final years in France, continuing to write poetry and relishing life with a grateful spirit and joyous attitude.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{29} Brodsky, 36-37.
Throughout his life, Neruda inspired many with his poetry but also incited divided opinions through his politics and actions. Pablo Neruda is considered one of the greatest poets of the 20th century. His poems have been translated into many languages and span a variety of styles and subject matter. Neruda possessed the gift of a poetic storyteller of deep human experience, whether he wrote of love, politics, or of common things. Chilean poet, Fernando Alegría (1918-2005), wrote in Modern Poetry Studies, “I want to emphasize something very simple: Neruda was, above all, a love poet and, more than anyone, an unwavering, powerful, joyous, conqueror of death.”

On July 12, 1904, Pablo Neruda was born in the town of Parral, in central Chile, as Ricardo Eliecer Neftalí Reyes Basoalto. His mother, Rosa Neftalí Basoalto Opazo, was a schoolteacher who wrote poetry. She had suffered from pulmonary problems her entire life and died from tuberculosis one month after her son’s birth. Neftalí’s father, José del Carmen Reyes Morales, was a railroad worker and a stern father. In 1906, Neftalí and his father moved to the village of Temuco. His father was soon married to a new wife, Trinidad Candia Malverde, who was a caring stepmother to Neftalí. Neftalí often referred to her as “guardian angel” or la mamadre (“more than mother”), and he wrote his first poem in honor of her.

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The landscape and climate of Chile with its overgrown forests and constant rain, had a profound and lifelong effect on Neftalí and his poetry. His father’s work as a railroad conductor and engineer allowed Neftalí to occasionally accompany him on the trains, which exposed him to endless possibilities of places outside the village. The opening of his *Memoirs* includes an homage to his home: “Below the volcanoes, beside the snowcapped mountains, among the great lakes, the fragrant, the silent, the tangled Chilean forest … I have come out of that earth, that mud, that silence, to roam, to go singing throughout the world.”

Neftalí lived in Temuco for fifteen years. There, he learned to respect hard work and to love nature. His love for poetry was not supported by his father or his peers at school. He found a kindred spirit and a supporter of his poetry in the principal of the Temuco girls’ school, Gabriel Mistral – poet and future Nobel laureate. Mistral recognized Neftalí’s talent and fueled him with books and the academic support that he lacked at home. Influenced by his older stepbrother, Orlando Mason, and others in Temuco, Neftalí’s social conscience developed. During the 1910’s in Chile, the country was undergoing a period of transformation in thought, in which political and philosophical ideas, including anarchism, socialism, and Marxism were coming into play. The year 1910 marked the centennial of Chile’s establishment as an independent republic. However, the country’s economy was in a dismal state, and society was infested with disease, rampant poverty, and crime.  

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Neftali’s father, José del Carmen, was violently against Neftali becoming a poet. One day, his father burst into his room, kicked over his shelves of books and poetry, and threw them out the window into the courtyard. José then went out to the courtyard and proceeded to burn all books and poetry as Neftalí watched, terrified. Later, Neftalí’s stepsister and confidante, Laura, disclosed to him that she had managed to save a few notebooks of his poetry. Unfortunately, these are the only instances of his poetry that survived from his childhood. It was in this same year that Neftalí adopted the pseudonym, Pablo Neruda (after reading Czech poet Jan Neruda’s *Stories of Mala Strana*, about the poverty and atrocities in the Mala Strana district in Prague). It is likely that Neftalí chose this name so that he could write and publish without fear of further assaults from his father.34

In 1921, after finishing high school in Temuco, Neruda set off for the capital city of Santiago, with the goal of continuing his studies and becoming a French teacher. Neruda was very productive, writing up to five poems per day, churning out his first books of poetry – *Crepusculario* in 1923 and *Twenty Love Poems* and *Song of Despair* in 1924. The quality of Neruda’s work was already high, and many of his poems were published in magazines, notably *Claridad*. Within his small Bohemian circles, Neruda was becoming well-known, but he was not at the point at which he could make his living solely from poetry. Writing magazine and newspaper articles and completing translations provided the necessary funds for his education and survival. In 1925, Neruda became the editor of the small literary magazine, *Caballo de Bastos*, and he finished writing a new

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book of poems *Venture of the Infinite Man*, which was influenced by the avant-garde and surrealist movements. As a translator, Neruda achieved success in translating long fragments of Rilke’s *Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* from French (Gide’s translation) into Spanish. Neruda was growing restless in Santiago, struggling to make ends meet, grappling with holding a responsible job rather than escaping into poetry, and he turned to other sources of making a living.

Latin American countries had a long tradition of sending poets abroad as consuls as ambassadors. Typically, this occurred once a poet had already achieved fame and notoriety, but Neruda was able to pull the right political strings in order to make it happen at the age of 23. In 1927, he was appointed Honorary Consul to Rangoon, Burma, in Southeast Asia. Although his spoken English was abysmal and his knowledge of foreign affairs nonexistent, he yearned for adventure. Neruda served as Honorary Consul in several locations following this first post in Rangoon. He served in Ceylon, Batavia, Singapore, and Buenos Aires. In Buenos Aires, he met Federico García Lorca, who became a close friend and colleague. Lorca and Neruda were the closest of friends until 1936, when Lorca was captured and executed by militiamen during the time of political unrest of the Spanish Civil War. Neruda continued to serve in consular appointments in Barcelona and then Madrid, where he established a new literary magazine, *Green Horse for Poetry*, and became its editor. While in Spain, Neruda befriended a group of like-minded poets and also gained an audience for his poetry. For the very first time, he

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36 Ibid, xvi.
gained international recognition that was directly tied to the Spanish language and tradition. Simultaneously, he was influencing the Spanish avant-garde, and he was being influenced by his politically active friends who were closely tied to radical politics and the Communist movement. When the Spanish Civil War broke out, Neruda lost his consular appointment due to political ties. He returned to Chile and traveled the country giving lectures.\footnote{Duran and Safir, \textit{Earth Tones: The Poetry of Pablo Neruda}, xviii.}

Neruda continued consular appointments, this time in Paris, then as Consul General in Mexico. As World War II began, it became increasingly important to Neruda that he fight fascism through poetry, lectures, and traveling throughout Latin America to spread knowledge. In 1945, he settled in Chile again and was elected Senator. He received the National Literary Prize and also officially joined the Communist Party.\footnote{Ibid, xx.}

Neruda became a spokesperson for 1946 leftist presidential candidate, González Videla. Videla won the election, but afterwards, he outcasted Neruda due to outside influences. In 1947, Neruda violated Chilean press censorship laws to publish a document entitled, “An Intimate Letter for Millions of Men,” which spoke out against President Videla. Neruda was immediately indicted as a seditious rebel. He was removed from the Senate, and Videla called for his arrest. The Communist Party was outlawed, and Neruda and all avowed communists were forced into hiding for many months. By 1950, Neruda was an international celebrity and yet, an outlaw in his own country. He continued to travel abroad and landed in Mexico at the Latin American Congress of the Partisans for
Peace. In Mexico, Neruda reencountered Matilde Urrutia, a fellow Chilean, and they continued a romantic relationship that they had begun earlier in their lives. During 1952, the political landscape of Chile had changed. The order for Neruda’s arrest had been revoked, and Neruda was able to return to Chile, this time accompanied by Matilde.39

Upon returning to Chile in 1952, Neruda began a new chapter in his poetic evolution. He was received with honor when he returned to his home country. While he was setting up a house in Santiago, he traveled to Temuco and to other parts of the country. He began to write his *Elemental Odes*, a new and successful departure from his previous poetic style. These new poems explored the depth and beauty of raw material, of everyday objects, similar to the *Dinggedichte* (“thing poems”) of Rainer Maria Rilke, whose work Neruda had previously studied.40

Neruda had many relationships throughout his life, including three marriages. His third marriage to Matilde Urrutia, however, was the one that would last and that would inspire some of the most passionate love poetry in the Spanish language, including Neruda’s poetry collections *One Hundred Love Sonnets, Extravagaria*, and *Barcarole*. Matilde and Neruda continued to travel, and wherever they went, crowds gathered to hear him read his own poetry. His powerful stage presence and deep, grumbling voice made him popular with audiences.41


40 Ibid, xxii.

By 1970, Neruda’s health was failing him, and he was diagnosed with prostate cancer. Nonetheless, he accepted a position as Ambassador to France. On October 8, 1971, while in France, Neruda was notified that he had been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. Neruda returned to Chile in 1972 as an internationally-renowned poet, but a man who was quite ill.\textsuperscript{42}

For the remainder of his life, Neruda retreated to his haven on Isla Negra with his wife, Matilde. His dedication to the working class of his country had been unwavering even though Neruda himself never really belonged to the working class. In terms of his politics, Neruda publicly applauded every speech given by Stalin, Krushchev, and other Communist party leaders, although he might not have agreed with every facet. Only in the late 1960s, in his book \textit{World’s End}, did he acknowledge his anguish over the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, and other various immoralities of the party.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, xxvi.

\textsuperscript{43} Duran and Safir, \textit{Earth Tones: The Poetry of Pablo Neruda}, xxvii.
3.4 James Agee

James Agee was born in Knoxville, Tennessee in 1909 to parents Jay Agee and Laura Tyler Agee. Jay Agee’s side of the family was a rural, farming family. Laura Agee’s side was staunchly religious, very cultured, and ran the gamut career-wise from businessmen to writers. James’s maternal grandmother, Emma, was one of the first women to graduate from the University of Michigan. She studied literature and passed down that love to her daughter, Laura (James’s mother), who wrote poetry in her spare time. The Episcopal faith also held strong roots in the Tyler family and continued to have a formidable influence on James Agee throughout his life.\(^\text{44}\)

About the time that James was born, Jay and Laura Agee settled in the suburbs of Knoxville, Tennessee. Jay Agee had accepted a position at the railroad company, which was owned by Laura’s father, Joel Tyler. The rural upbringing of Jay’s side of the family and the tightly-buttoned upper class sensibilities of the staunchly religious Tyler family created an inner conflict in young James Agee. Although James identified intensely with the rugged, loving warmth of his father, he was drawn to the artistic pursuits of the Tylers.\(^\text{45}\)

On May 17, 1916, Jay Agee’s father suffered a stroke. Jay’s brother called with the information, and Jay got on the road in the middle of the night and made it safely to


his family’s home in La Follette, Tennessee. On the return trip, however, through winding country roads, he drove full speed into a ditch and was thrown from the car. A passerby found Jay Agee face-down, approximately one foot from his car, already dead. The sudden, tragic death of Jay Agee profoundly affected the entire family.\footnote{Bergreen, 12-19.}

In the summer of 1918, when James was nine years old, James’s mother decided to move with her two children to the grounds of St. Andrew’s, in south central Tennessee. The school’s campus was administered by the Monastic Order of the Holy Cross and was situated on the scenic Cumberland Plateau. After only a short time at the school, it became apparent to the monks that James Agee possessed a great aptitude for language, and they allowed him access to the library, which was a very rare privilege for a student. He was soon reading and analyzing poems by John Keats, whose highly descriptive language appealed to Agee. He realized that in literature, he could satisfy his wildest impulses without coming to actual harm. Due in part to the lack of a father figure, James became very close to his history teacher and Episcopal priest, Father James Harold Flye, with whom he maintained a close friendship throughout his life. A book of their written correspondence, \textit{The Letters of James Agee to Father Flye}, which contained thirty years-worth of their exchange of letters, was published posthumously.\footnote{Bergreen, 23-35.}

As the Agee family began exploring options for James’s high school academics, they set their sights on Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire. While at Phillips Exeter Academy, Agee was able to publish his poems and stories in the school’s paper, \textit{Monthly}. He was soon admitted to the literary fraternity, the Lantern Club, and he took
interest in a new passion – movies. He paid close attention to the emerging language of
cinema, the rhythms of editing, and the use of camera angles and movement in telling
stories. By his senior year, he had become editor of the *Monthly* and president of the
Lantern Club. Although his grades at Exeter were below average, except for perfect
marks in English, his professors and mentors wrote him excellent letters of
recommendation for Harvard. One even said “He was meant for Harvard and Harvard for
him.”48 He was accepted into Harvard University for the fall of 1928.49

Despite his pre-conceived notions about the academic prowess of Harvard, James
was unimpressed by the routine lectures of his freshman professors, even in the English
department. With more freedom, he was able to fill his hours reading Dostoevsky and
James Joyce at Harvard’s Widener Library and at the Boston Public Library. He often
traveled to New York City to watch newly released films all night in Times Square. His
roommate, Robert Saudek, recalls that Agee required little sleep, often coming home at
4am and getting up to serve as an altar boy at 7am Mass at the Cowley Fathers Episcopal
Monastery on campus. He also smoked cigarettes constantly (evidenced by the orange
stain on his fingertips). Prohibition was in full force during this time, and Agee, as well
as many other college students, solicited the help of bootleggers in attaining liquor.
Under the influence of alcohol, James would occasionally mention his deceased father,
and it was always with “awed hush and an unmistakable worshipfulness” that everyone

48 Bergreen, 53.

49 Bergreen, 50-55.
noticed. Because of the early and sudden death of his father, Agee possessed the belief that he, too, would die under similar, sudden circumstances.\textsuperscript{50}

Agee became more reclusive in order to write and study more. He resented any visitors while he was focused on his writing. He worked at length on composing an epic poem, “Epithalamium,” about a bride and groom whose marriage bed becomes their grave. Once completed, “Epithalamium” solidified Agee’s place as a gifted writer, winning Harvard’s prestigious Garrison Prize, and he was elected to the editorial board of the Advocate, Harvard’s literary magazine. Every issue of Advocate after this point, contained at least one of Agee’s poems. He also took on the role of book reviewer, as he was a voracious reader and critic, even before he held a position of reviewing books. In his remaining time at Harvard, he became senior editor of the Advocate, and oversaw a fantastically successful parody edition of Time magazine, which propelled him into a job at Time, Inc. as a writer for Fortune and Time magazines. Upon graduation in the spring of 1932, Agee promptly moved to New York City.\textsuperscript{51}

Archibald MacLeish, another serious writer of poetry and prose, also worked at Time and served as proof that one could pay the bills by working as a journalist and still have enough time to pursue other outlets for writing. Despite Agee’s constant dread of selling out, he found that working at Fortune had its advantages such as instilling discipline and the ability to work under a deadline, rather than floundering around in the

\textsuperscript{50} Bergreen, 56-61.

\textsuperscript{51} Bergreen, 71-112.
anxiety of one’s own thoughts (as Agee was accustomed to doing). In the fall of 1932, Agee completed his story, “Let Us Now Praise Famous Men.”

Agee’s poetic colleague at Fortune, MacLeish, sought out Agee’s poetry for publication. He asked Agee to give him his best poems from over the years and aimed to get them published through a friend, Stephen Vincent Benét, who headed the Yale Younger Poets series of publications. Benét selected Agee’s poems from the forty-two collections under consideration for the 1934 award. At the time, the Yale Younger Poets series had a reputation for launching gifted poets into long, productive careers. This offer to publish with Yale University Press was a welcome accolade and offered much-needed encouragement to Agee. Agee named this entire collection “Permit Me Voyage” after its final poem. The publication of “Permit Me Voyage” only sold 600 copies, but it brought additional benefits, such as submission requests for other literary anthologies. In fact, four of his poems were published in Modern American Poetry, an anthology published by Harcourt in the following year.

As a writer, Agee was notably rebellious. His account of Depression-era Alabama sharecroppers, “Let Us Now Praise Famous Men,” was rejected by his editors at Fortune and Time. Yet, he published it as a book in 1941, and it was not a success, selling only 600 copies. However, it is now regarded as an iconic social commentary. In 1942, Agee

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52 Bergreen, 112-135.

53 Bergreen, 90-145.
became a movie critic for both *The Nation* and *Time* magazine. He was known for writing movie reviews “more memorable than the movies that inspired them.”

Agee’s beginnings as a poet gave way to more “practical” writing, and he became a groundbreaking screenwriter, adapting David Grubb’s novel *The Night of the Hunter* into a screenplay, which materialized into the thrilling 1955 movie of the same name. He also adapted C.S. Forester’s novel *The African Queen* into the 1951 film classic featuring Katharine Hepburn and Humphrey Bogart.

By the 1950’s, James Agee’s health had been in decline for some time, experiencing multiple instances of angina attacks and chest pains daily. He was on his third marriage and was still drinking and smoking heavily, in spite of having ongoing nightmares about his own death. The anxiety that began strangling him as a young boy was taking its final hold. On May 13, 1955, Agee felt well enough to attend a party at socialite Gloria Vanderbilt's residence in Greenwich Village. There, he socialized with friends and even discussed his semi-autobiographical novel, *A Death in the Family*, with David McDowell, who later published the work.

On May 16, 1955, on his way to a doctor’s appointment via taxi, James Agee suffered a heart attack and lost consciousness. The taxi rushed him to Roosevelt Hospital, where he was proclaimed dead upon arrival. He was 45 years old. On May 19, 1950,

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55 Bergreen, 269-278.

56 Bergreen, 404-406.
Agee’s longtime friend and confidant, Father James Harold Flye, presided over the Mass for Agee at St. Luke’s Chapel in New York City. Agee was buried at his farm in Hillsdale, New York, with a blank tombstone, amidst a field of lilacs.\(^{57}\)

### 3.5 Posthumous Acclaim

As he predicted, James Agee won greater acclaim in death than he had in life. David McDowell and Yvonne Obolensky set up a publishing company, and they published *A Death in the Family* in 1957, which won the 1957 Pulitzer Prize for fiction. In 1958, they published *Agee on Film: Reviews and Comments*, a collection of his film reviews and articles. It was immediately recognized as a classic in the genre and is considered required reading for anyone interested in studying film. In 1960, Houghton Mifflin reissued the long-forgotten *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, complete with Walker Evans’s photographs. The books sold nearly half a million copies. Also in 1960, *A Death in the Family* was adapted for the stage by Tad Mosel, and became a Broadway hit. The play was entitled *All the Way Home*, and it won a Pulitzer Prize. In 1962, *James Agee’s Letters to Father Flye*, the collection of Agee’s thirty-year correspondence with Father Flye, were published with critical acclaim. In the fall of 1963, the film version of *All the Way Home*, based on Agee’s novel *A Death in the Family*, had its world premiere in Knoxville, featuring Jean Simmons as Agee’s mother and Robert Preston as his father.\(^{58}\)

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\(^{57}\) Bergeen, 398-407.

\(^{58}\) Bergreen, 408-409.
CHAPTER 4

NOCTURNES: THE MUSIC

The Nocturnes were written by Lauridsen as the American Choral Directors Association’s Raymond W. Brock Memorial Commission for the national convention held in Los Angeles in 2005. At the time of the premiere at the ACDA convention, the choral cycle consisted of three pieces: “Sa Nuit d’Été,” “Soneto de la Noche,” and “Sure on this Shining Night.” The fourth movement of the cycle, “Epilogue: Voici le Soir,” which rounds out the choral cycle, was written afterward, in 2008. The three-movement version of Nocturnes was premiered by the Donald Brinegar Singers of Los Angeles with Donald Brinegar conducting and with Lauridsen himself at the piano at the 2005 ACDA National Conference in Los Angeles. “Sure on this Shining Night” was the first piece composed, and the rest followed as Lauridsen decided to do a cycle of night poems in a variety of languages.

Three different languages and poets are utilized throughout the Nocturnes cycle: “Sa nuit d’Été” in French, set to a poem by Rainer Maria Rilke, “Soneto de la Noche” in Spanish, set to a sonnet by Pablo Neruda, “Sure on this Shining Night” in English, set to a poem by James Agee, and “Epilogue: Voici le Soir” returning to French and the poetry of Rilke.

In Nocturnes specifically, Lauridsen geared every aspect of each piece to the text – the content, the language, when it was written, the style. In his interview with the author of this paper, Lauridsen said, “What I love about Rilke is that he forces you to use your imagination. So all these images that he conjures up are very mysterious.”
4.1 “Sa Nuit d’Été”

(Sa Nuit d’Été)

Si je pourrais avec mes mains brûlantes
fondre ton corps autour ton coeur d’amante,
ah que la nuit deviendrait transparente
le prenant pour un astre attardé
qui toujours dès le premier temps des mondes
était perdu et qui commence sa ronde
en tâtonnant de sa lumière blonde
sa première nuit, sa nuit, sa nuit d’été.

-Rainer Maria Rilke

(Its Summer Night)

If, with my burning hands, I could melt
the body surrounding your lover’s heart,
ah! how the night would become translucent,
taking it for a late star,
which, from the first moments of the world,
was forever lost, and which begins its course
with its blonde light, trying to reach out towards
its first night, its night, its summer night.

-translation by Byron Adams

“Sa Nuit d’Été” is set to one of Rainer Maria Rilke’s French poems, and
Lauridsen has stated that he was intending to paint a mysterious night in Paris in the
1920s, which was about the time the poem was written. Lauridsen includes more
complex, jazz-tinged chords than is typical in the tonal palette of his mature
compositional period. “Sa Nuit d’Été” incorporates three melodic motives, each tied to a
separate line of text.

Before any of the vocal motives appear, the piano sets the stage for the piece with
a haunting five-tone chord (second-inversion C-sharp major triad with added second and
fourth), with an E-natural then appearing in the melody on beat two, thus setting up the
juxtaposition of both C-sharp major and C-sharp minor tonalities within this piece. The
entirety of the choral parts within “Sa Nuit d'Été” exist within the C-sharp major tonality,

59 Lauridsen interview by author, October 17, 2017, Appendix A.
but the piano part alone at the beginning and end, adds in the flavor of C-sharp minor (Example 2).


As the vocal lines unfold, Motive 1 is presented in mm. 5-9 to the text “Si je pourrais avec mes mains brûlantes, fondre ton corps autour ton coeur d'amante” (translation: “If, with my burning hands, I could melt the body surrounding your lover’s heart”). The rhythmic motive is presented in all voice parts in a homorhythmic manner, but Lauridsen composed the melody in the soprano line. This motive features simultaneous eighth notes composed in the style of Gregorian chant (as is typical of much of Lauridsen’s choral writing), and the syllabic stress is written to unfold in a lilting, speechlike manner (Example 3).

Motive 2 appears in mm. 18-21 (Example 4) in the tenor voice and then is transferred to the soprano voice on the repetition in mm. 22-25 (Example 5). The text and translation for this motive are as follows: “ah, que la nuit deviendrait transparente” (ah! how the night would become translucent/transparent). The music reflects the joy of this statement as the E-natural pitch of the C-sharp minor tonality dissolves, allowing an unequivocally major tonality, and the SATB voices simultaneously erupt into a joyful, rapturous waltz in 3/4.

The shortest and final motive, motive 3 (Example 6) occurs from the pickup of m. 37 to m. 39 on the text “sa nuit, sa nuit d'été” (“its night, its summer night”). At this point, all lines of text in the poem have been utilized.


Now for the climactic moment of the piece, Lauridsen combined all the motives in an exercise of invertible counterpoint from the pickup to mm. 40-48. Motive 1 and its harmonization are executed by S1, S2, and T1, while the A2, B1, and B2 have motive 2 and its harmonization. Motive 3 is presented first by T2 and then rhythmically displaced by one beat in the A1 voice (Example 7). After four measures, many of the voice parts swap motives, and the S2 voice takes motive 3 while the T1 voice echoes the S2 rhythmically displaced by one beat.
Example 7. Morten Lauridsen, “Sa Nuit d’Été,” mm. 40-43. All motives combine.

This section is such a climactic flourish of Lauridsen’s melodic creation, and yet, it is a mere eight measures in length, leaving the listener wanting more. Lauridsen undeniably could have drawn out this section of invertible counterpoint for longer, but it is likely that the brevity of this section foreshadows the fact that this summer night of beauty and bliss is but a fleeting moment in time, not meant to last forever.

Nearing the end, at m. 48, the E-natural of the C-sharp minor set returns in the piano part to coexist with the C-sharp major tonality, and the choir resolves, sustaining a first-inversion five-tone chord (C-sharp major with added second and fourth). The piano
has the last word with a plagal cadence into two simultaneous C-sharps (in octaves one and three).
4.2 “Soneto de la Noche”

“Soneto LXXIX” (from Cien Sonetos de amor)

Cuando yo muero quiero tus manos en mis ojos:
quiero la luz y el trigo de tus manos amadas
pasar una vez más sobre mí su frescura:
sentir la suavidad que cambió mi destino.
Quiero que vivas mientras yo, dormido, te espero,
quiero que tus oídos sigan oyendo el viento,
que huelas el aroma del mar que amamos juntos
y que sigas pisando la arena que pisamos.
    Quiero que lo que amo siga vivo
    y a ti te amé y canté sobre todas las cosas,
    por eso sigue tú floreciendo, florida,
    para que alcances todo lo que mi amor te ordena,
    para que se pasee mi sombra por tu pelo,
    para que así conozcan la razón de mi canto.

-Pablo Neruda

“Sonnet 79” (from 100 Love Sonnets)

When I die, I want your hands upon my eyes:
I want the light and the wheat of your beloved hands
to pass their freshness over me one more time
I want to feel the gentleness that changed my destiny.
I want you to live while I wait for you, asleep,
    I want your ears to still hear the wind,
I want you to smell the scent of the sea we both loved,
and to continue walking on the sand we walked on.
    I want all that I love to keep on living,
    and you whom I loved and sang above all things
To keep flowering into full bloom.
so that you can touch all that my love provides you,
so that my shadow may pass over your hair,
so that all may know the reason for my song.

-translated by Nicholas Lauridsen

For the second movement of Nocturnes, Lauridsen set Pablo Neruda’s “Soneto de la Noche” as a tender Chilean folksong to mirror Neruda’s roots in his home country of Chile. This beautiful love poem is set from the male perspective, a husband speaking to
his wife about how when he dies he wants her to go on living and loving life as he waits for her asleep. This poem is from Neruda’s *Cien sonetos de amor* (“100 Love Sonnets”), which he wrote later in his life (1959) once he and the love of his life, Matilde Urrutia, had been married and taken up residence together at their beach getaway on Isla Negra. Neruda’s love poetry to Matilde is considered some of the most romantic, sensual love poetry in the Spanish language. *Cien sonetos de amor* is organized into four sections – morning, afternoon, evening, and night. Sonnet 79, the poem chosen for “Soneto de la Noche,” is in the last section of the book – night. It upholds the standard structure of a sonnet with 14 lines of text in iambic pentameter.

Lauridsen set the text syllabically and with short eighth- and sixteenth-note values, which heightens the passionate nature of the text. The quick utterance of the Spanish text, however, poses tremendous technical difficulties for a non-Spanish-speaking choir, which is one of the reasons this movement is the most challenging of the *Nocturnes* cycle.

In terms of length and difficulty, “Soneto de la Noche” is the most difficult and the longest movement of *Nocturnes*, being 115 measures and approximately 6 minutes long. It is also the only movement that is entirely a cappella. The ranges and vocal lines are challenging in each voice part with many disjunct leaps and registral shifts. Also, Lauridsen has written a very broad dynamic spectrum, from the softest ppp at the opening iteration of the text “cuando yo muero” (“when I die”) to the loudest ff (letter D, m. 63), which assists in expressing the breadth of passion depicted in the Neruda poem but also creates greater technical difficulty for the choir. To accompany the extreme dynamics in these sections, Lauridsen also indicates semplicemente (simply) and teneramente.
(tenderly) at m. 1, and *appassionata* (passionate) and *pesante* (heavy) at m. 63. There are many other markings throughout to indicate character, specific breath markings, tenuti, ritardendi, and tempi markings, which clearly show that Lauridsen cares deeply about helping a choir replicate the sounds he imagined when composing the piece.

Further painting the picture of the male voice as the narrator, Lauridsen uses the tenor and bass voices to execute cadential extensions at mm. 16-19 and 35-38, which close out each section of poetry with expressive sensitivity (Example 8).


Additionally, in mm. 79-94, the majority of the choir sustains a closed “n,” while the baritones and tenors trade off the melody. It seems that Lauridsen may have intended
this musical moment to embody Pablo Neruda’s voice as the poet singing to his beloved Matilda, and the unison line makes it more personal and heartfelt (Example 9).


In the climactic middle section of this piece (mm. 39-62), Lauridsen shows preference for the subdominant as he alternates between first inversion I and IV triads with the added 4\textsuperscript{th} in the I chords and added 2\textsuperscript{nd} in the IV chords. By gravitating toward subdominant harmonies, he avoids the functional pull of the leading tone present in the dominant harmonies and also creates an emphasis on text expression since the I chord (with added 4\textsuperscript{th}) and IV chord (with added 2\textsuperscript{nd}) create several shared pitches between the triads.
The text in this section translates to the following:

_I want all that I love to keep on living,
And you whom I loved and sang above all things
To keep flowering into full bloom,_

This section of text is an expression of life, love, and passion. So much so that the text is repeated twice, the first time in F-sharp major, and the second time a minor third higher, in the key of A major. Notice how the homophonic texture at letter C moves to polyphony as each voice part emerges from the texture with stretto-like entrances, beginning with the tenor, then the alto, followed by the soprano and bass simultaneously (Example 10).


In the author’s interview with Lauridsen, he cited the pedal tone F-sharp found in the lowest bass part as the foundation for everything from letter E page 9 to the end. He
said it is “simply painting the idea of a person waiting and saying ‘I’m your foundation, and I’m waiting for you.’” In fact, the basses sing a pedal F-sharp2 from m. 79 to the end of the piece at m. 115 (Example 11).


Measure 78 is the point at which all lines of the sonnet have been utilized, and at m. 79, the texture becomes more sparse, returning to the beginning of the sonnet, as each voice part utters a line of the text. This delivery of the text in this section must be extremely delicate, as the intent of the composer turns more personal, as if each voice part is delivering this message to their own beloved. From mm. 79-109, Lauridsen reiterates the first two stanzas of the sonnet. From mm. 110-111, the baritones sing the text, “Quiero que vivas mientras yo” (“I want you to live”). Finally, from m. 112 to the end, the entire choir returns to a homorhythmic iteration of the text “dormido, te espero,

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60 Lauridsen interview by author, October 17, 2017, Appendix A.
te espero” (“asleep, I wait for you, I wait for you.”) as if the performers are bidding farewell to their beloved and drawing their dying breath.
4.3 “Sure on this Shining Night”

The lyrics of “Sure on this Shining Night” are excerpted from James Agee’s poem “Description of Elysium,” which is from his earliest book of poetry, Permit Me Voyage. Although Permit Me Voyage was published when Agee was 24 years old, he wrote much of its contents while an undergraduate student at Harvard University. The entire text for Description of Elysium is as follows. (The text for Lauridsen’s “Sure on this shining night” begins in the sixth stanza with “Sure on this shining night” and ends after the eighth stanza with “of shadows on the stars.”)

Description of Elysium
There: far, friend: ours: dear dominion:

Whole health resides with peace,
Gladness and never harm,
There not time turning,
Nor fear of flower of snow

Where marbling water slides
No charm may halt of chill,
Air aisling the open acres,
And all the gracious trees

Sprout up their standing fountains
Of wind-beloved green
And the blue conclaved mountains
Are grave guards

Stone and springing field
Wide one tenderness,
The unalterable hour
Smiles deathlessness:

No thing is there thinks:
Mind the witherer
Withers on the outward air:
We can not come there.
Sure on this shining night
Of starmade shadows round,
Kindness must watch for me
This side the ground.

The late year lies down the north.
All is healed, all is health.
High summer holds the earth.
Hearts all whole.

Sure on this shining night I weep for wonder wandering far alone
Of shadows on the stars.

Now thorn bone bare
Silenced with iron the branch’s gullet:
Rattling merely on the air
Of hornleaved holly:

The stony mark where sand was by
The water of a nailed foot:
The berry harder than the beak:
The hole beneath the dead oak root:

All now brought quiet
Through the latest throe
Quieted and ready and quiet:
Still not snow:

Still thorn bone bare
Iron in the silenced gully
Rattling only of air
Through hornleaved holly.

Due to his unconventional use of punctuation, Agee’s poetry is often difficult to decipher. It requires multiple readings and a disregard for traditional punctuation to fully unpack the intended delivery of the poem. The majority of Description of Elysium adheres to typical Agee poetic style with its untraditional punctuation. However, the “Sure on this Shining Night” portion of the poem contains no colons and very little
punctuation, making the text much more prosodic, more free-form. The final two stanzas of “Sure on this Shining Night” are especially uncanny in that they contain entirely no punctuation until the end: “Sure on this shining night I weep for wonder wandering far alone/ Of shadows on the stars.”

Although this poem seems to take on a different meaning based on the reader, one undeniable commonality of interpretation is that “Sure on this Shining Night” expresses a deep spiritualism and reflection on life. Spiritualism is not exclusively defined by religion, per se, but instead by a heightened sense of self and of the human spirit. In the Waldron Island film, Lauridsen calls Agee’s poem “very pantheistic, the poem, feeling at one with nature, the wondrous awe that one has being within nature.” 61 It is likely that Agee wrote “Sure on this Shining Night” while a student at Harvard. Agee’s father-in-law possessed a high-powered telescope, which Agee would use to gaze at the moon and the rings around Saturn during his time as a student, and he would get lost in thought and in his writing after long bouts at the telescope.62

Shining Night is the only movement in Nocturnes that does not change keys or imply another key area. It is the stronghold (in D-flat major), unwavering, so sure, so at peace. This offers quite a contrast from the mystery of the Rilke poetry of the outer movements and of the heightened passion created by the dramatic key change in “Soneto de la Noche.”

The melodies Lauridsen writes in “Sure on this Shining Night” (both A and B sections) are very soloistic, which makes it unsurprising that Lauridsen later turned this

62 Bergreen, 84-85.
piece into a vocal duet for soprano and tenor, accompanied by piano. In 2011, Lauridsen created *Two Songs on American Poems* (for baritone soloist and piano) from two of his choral works – “Prayer” and “Sure on this Shining Night.” Both pieces are in D-flat major, have an intrinsically healing message, and are fashioned after the lyrical melodies of Broadway composers Jerome Kern, George Gershwin, and Cole Porter.

Having sung as a long-term tenor in the Los Angeles Master Chorale, where Lauridsen served as composer-in-residence, composer Shawn Kirchner shared this reflection on Lauridsen’s music:

“What stands out about his approach to choral composing is his respect for the voice—for line, for melody. One could also call this approach a reverence for song itself. Singers are amazingly versatile in what they can do with their voices, but nothing will ever replace the basic wired-in aspect of singing: the fact that the voice wants to sing line, the arc of a phrase, a melodic curve. There are lines in Lauridsen that feel like a privilege to sing, such as the opening melody in *Sure on This Shining Night*. It’s a visceral experience, almost as if the material reaches inside you and compels you to offer up the very best you have to give.”

Reflecting on his song-writing inspiration, Lauridsen said:

“In all my music, I gear everything in the music itself to all aspects of the text—the content, the language, when it was written, the style, everything about it. So, “Shining Night,” of course, is a long-lyric song and has its roots in the Broadway musical, and I love that. It’s part of my DNA. I grew up on that stuff. I love the long lyric lines that you can find that are memorable, that we cannot forget, and combined with superb texts.”

In “Sure on this Shining Night,” Lauridsen makes excellent use of the alliteration present in Agee’s poem by repeating the “sh” throughout the A section in the words “sure” and “shining.” The melismatic and prolonged treatment of the word “shining” in

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64 Lauridsen interview by author, October 17, 2017, Appendix A.
mm. 10-11, 12-13, 18-21, 22-23, 40, 42-43, 50, 52-53 creates a distinct visual image of stars lighting up the sky. Especially when the melismas overlap, as in mm. 22-23, the music and text work together to evoke a sense of shooting stars, dancing across the night sky (Example 12).


The use of mostly fricative consonants creates a hushed crispness in the text pronunciation that becomes magical when paired with the soaring melodies and cluster chords of added seconds and fourths. In the B section (mm. 24-39), the voiceless glottal fricative “h” as in “all in healed, all is health” and “hearts all whole” (as in mm. 29-32) also creates this effect.

In 2009, Adam Kirsch wrote a compelling article about James Agee in the Harvard Magazine entitled “Vistas of Perfection: the self-dissatisfied life of James Agee.” In that article, Kirsch so poignantly reflected, “If Agee had been a better governor of his life and talent, he might have written more and lived longer; but he would not have written at the particular pitch of desperate sincerity and fearful compassion that makes
Indeed, the particular pitch of sincerity present in both Agee’s poem and Lauridsen’s composition “Sure on this Shining Night” mesmerizes listeners and performers alike, making this piece a worthy and lasting part of the 21st century choral repertoire and the cornerstone of the Nocturnes song cycle.

“Sure on this Shining Night,” is the most often-performed movement of the cycle, due primarily to it being in English and its accessibility for almost any advanced high school choir. This piece, however, takes on a different meaning when sung by a more professional choir, with the depth and breadth of life experiences that leads to a true understanding of the text. A more skilled choir can also execute the difficult wide leaps while maintaining legato phrasing. The long-lyric disjunct melody of “Sure on this Shining Night” creates a haunting phrase that hangs in the air above everything else, like a star. Lauridsen uses the word “shining” as a trigger word and treats it melismatically.

Lauridsen utilized the style of the long-lyric ballads of the Broadway stage, channeling musical theatre classics such as “This Nearly was Mine” and “Some Enchanted Evening” from South Pacific (Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II), “Make Believe” and “Why Do I Love You?” from Showboat (Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II), and “Oh What a Beautiful Morning” and “People will Say We’re in Love” from Oklahoma (Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II). In his interview with the author, Lauridsen spoke fondly of staying at Oscar Hammerstein’s farm, which has been converted into a bed and breakfast, every time he visits Pennsylvania. It is clear

that he has a great fondness for composers of American musical theatre, and their long-lyric ballads that inspired “Sure on this Shining Night.”
4.4 “Epilogue: Voici le Soir”

(Voici le soir)

Pendant tout un jour encore je vous ai beaucoup aimées,
collines émues.

C’est beau de voir
Mais: de sentir à la doublure des paupières fermées
la douceur d’avoir vu...
-Rainer Maria Rilke

(Night has come)

For one whole day again I’ve loved you so much,
stirring hills.

It’s beautiful to see.
But: to feel in the lining of closed eyelids
The sweetness of having seen...
-translated by Morten Lauridsen

Lauridsen did not compose this movement with the original Nocturnes cycle in 2005. It was in 2008 that he decided to add it in order to round out the cycle. In the front cover of “Epilogue,” Lauridsen states, “I could not resist Rilke’s beautiful little poem which is set against the rich, jazz-tinged modal harmonies and bell sounds which began the cycle and which now bring the Nocturnes to a quiet end as darkness arrives.”

In this final movement, “Epilogue: Voici le Soir,” Lauridsen hearkens back to material from the first movement, “Sa Nuit d’Été,” which is mostly heard in the coexistence of the C-sharp major and C-sharp minor tonalities, the general tonal language, and the piano part. This movement is incredibly brief at a mere 29 measures. The first seventeen measures are a cappella, with the text set syllabically. The four voices

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chant the text homorhythmically, repeating roughly the same pitches, which allows the text to be expressed very clearly and simply. There are only two measures (mm. 5-6) that veer from the choral chanting of text. During these measures, each voice enters on a different beat, which is reminiscent of a similar, stretto-like treatment of the voices present in all three previous movements of Nocturnes.

When the piano part returns at m. 17, it brings back material from the first movement, namely the tolling bell effect of the C-sharp and E-natural. Although not identical to the piano part of “Sa Nuit d’Été,” the piano in “Epilogue” uses the same pitch material (C-sharp, D-sharp, E-natural, F-sharp, G-sharp, A-sharp, B) and is an augmented version of the original. In the “Epilogue,” however, the right hand of the piano utilizes an E-natural, while the left hand utilizes an E-sharp, creating a split-third chord. See the following Example 13a and Example 13b to view the piano parts side by side.

Example 13b. Morten Lauridsen, “Epilogue: Voici le Soir” mm. 25-29. Piano part, an augmented version of the piano part in “Sa Nuit d’Été”.

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Although the original *Nocturnes* cycle with the three movements – “Sa nuit d’Été,” “Soneto de la noche,” and “Sure on this Shining Night” – presented three beautifully expressive pieces of music that could stand alone, they were not quite unified, which left the song cycle with a sense of hanging in midair, without closure. The addition of “Epilogue” created an ending of peaceful serenity and oneness with the world that ties in material from the first movement, “Sa nuit d’Été,” and a return to the French poetry of Rilke. “Epilogue” was a small gesture by Lauridsen, but an effective one that allows the listener to breathe a sigh of relief and a sense of repose in hearing the return of familiar material in the piano and the air of mystery associated with Rilke’s poetry. In “Epilogue,” there is a looming feeling of more unanswered questions, but that somehow, all is right with the world. Evening has come to a close, and we can rest well.
CONCLUSION

Music historian Nick Strimple stated that Lauridsen’s compositions involve “the constant realignment of a few vertical sonorities.” Often, the lack of forward motion propelled by functional harmony (coupled with his characteristic additive harmonies and first inversion triads) allows Lauridsen’s music to simply linger in the air, unaffected by outside forces. This ethereal, timeless quality allows his music to transcend time, place, and outside circumstances. This is the reason why, despite the contrasting elements of the *Nocturnes*, that these choral works are able to achieve unity amidst the differences in language and compositional style between them.

The legacy of the three poets of *Nocturnes* – Rainer Maria Rilke, Pablo Neruda, and James Agee – lives on through the intertwining of their works in this song cycle. Three poets who were not likely to meet, but who shared similar ideas and passions, finally meet, posthumously, through Lauridsen’s music. Three fiery temperaments, depicted in the night, at peace, have found repose and are laid serenely to rest within the lush, timeless choral music of Morten Lauridsen.

Morten Lauridsen’s music, including *Nocturnes*, will certainly hold a place in the canon of choral music. He, along with Eric Whitacre, began the transition of choral composers into the 21st century language of tonal clusters existing as consonance, some without necessary resolution. Lauridsen’s attention to poetry and his delicate setting of that poetry in a melodic line is also one of the most worthy and important characteristics of his music for which he will be remembered by posterity.

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67 Strimple, 247.
APPENDIX A

MORTEN LAURIDSEN INTERVIEW
Interview with Morten Lauridsen
By Maggie Blair Owens
October 17, 2017

Key:
MO: Maggie Owens
ML: Morten Lauridsen

MO: Good afternoon. This is Maggie Owens. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me about Nocturnes today.

ML: Ah yes, Nocturnes. I just did a residency with the poet Dana Gioia and Cabrillo College this past week, and we did the Neruda and Shining Night there. Then I did a new recording of the entire four movements of the Nocturnes in Austria for a brand new CD that’s going to come out in February for Deutsche Grammophone and the Chamber Choir of Europe. It’s going to be a spectacular CD. It’s called Lux Aeterna: The Choral Music of Morten Lauridsen, and it opens with the Lux Aeterna, and then it has selections of various works of mine, including the premier recordings of the new Neruda that I did last year (another sonnet), and then Dana Gioia’s “Prayer” is on there as well. And the Nocturnes will be there. I think it will be terrific. It’s with the Chamber Choir of Europe and an Italian orchestra, and I’m very very pleased with it. I was in Austria for nine days doing that one.

So, what can I do for you?

MO: There are several recordings of Nocturnes, some with the original three pieces and some with the “Epilogue” included. Are there any particular recordings of the set that really allow the music to unfold in the way you envisioned it?

ML: I recommend the [recording] by Voce. That’s the one I would recommend to this point. You see, I wrote the Epilogue later, after I did the recording with Polyphony. The LA Master Chorale wanted to do a full concert of my music at Disney Hall, and about that same time I ran across this beautiful couplet by Rilke. It was just perfect, and I added that as an epilogue and brought back material from the first movement, and it ended the cycle mysteriously as if darkness had fallen again. And I’m glad I did that.

MO: A lot of my questions are about text and about how you decided upon those four texts, being in different languages and from vastly different poets. I’m really fascinated by the beauty of these texts. Soneto de la Noche was the first one that I read, and I couldn’t get my mind off of it.
ML: It is the most beautiful love poem I’ve ever run across. It simply doesn’t get any better than that. And so I set it as a very tender, almost like a Chilean folk song with the long lyric melody, and as you saw in your analysis, it’s divided up… everybody gets a piece of it, don’t they? Especially when it returns at the ending, and that long, sustaining F# in the 2nd basses is simply painting the idea of a person waiting and saying ‘I’m your foundation, and I’m waiting for you.’ And so everything goes on above that F#. And then the middle section, of course (sings the middle section motive), is more vibrant, and there’s this ‘I want you to go ahead and live while I wait for you, asleep. Blossom into full bloom.’ So it’s got to be more vibrant. But, it’s a good song. I set it simply as if it were a tender folk song, as if one were reciting this poem to the most important person in their life. Yeah, I love Neruda. The new Neruda (I don’t know if you have heard it yet. You can find a link to it on mortenlauridsen.net), I did that one with Susie Digby and her group in Los Angeles last year, “And Now You’re Mine.” So, go to the link and find it under new music, and you’ll find the recording with the translation by Dana Gioia, who is my best friend and whose “Prayer” I set to music. He and I are very close.

MO: What you said is particularly poignant to me. My husband is a low bass, and he’ll be singing in my upcoming recital, and that sustained F# that you talk about makes much more sense now. He will be portraying a character. Thank you for revealing that.

ML: Tell him that he’s the foundation for everything that goes on in that song.

MO: I know that Nocturnes was composed for the Brock Composition Commission in 2005. Did you compose the Nocturnes specifically for the commission, or had you already been ruminating on this work?

ML: Shining Night was well underway when I got a call from Dr. Jim Brooks. He has since passed away. He and members of the Brock Commission Committee had been calling me every two years saying ‘do this thing,’ and I said ‘I can’t. I’m composer in residence with LA Master Chorale. I’m tied up with that.” And so, it was actually kind of interesting, I got a call from Paul Salamunovich saying that he just heard from [Jim Brooks] and that he was going to call me again because he was aware that both Paul and I had retired from our posts with LA Master Chorale, and the ACDA convention was going to be in Los Angeles, and so he was going to call me again because he was aware that both Paul and I had retired from our posts with LA Master Chorale, and the ACDA convention was going to be in Los Angeles, and so he was going to call me and arm twist my arm to do it. So he called, and so I said ‘well, what do you like for these Brock commissions? What kind of thing are you after?.’ And he said that they don’t prefer the kind of
piece that is done once and then put on a shelf. They like something that a lot of people can do, and that’s something (he was talking about my music – that there’s certain piece of mine that everyone can do, “Dirait-on,” for example). He said, ‘If you can write a piece that a lot of people can do after it,’ and I said, ‘well, I’m thinking of ‘Sure on this Shining Night.’ It’s a lyrical song. And he said, ‘that’d be perfect!’ So I said, ok. That’ll be it then. But… I might want to add to it. And if I add to it, I’ll come back to you again, and we can revise the commission honorarium and all that stuff. So it occurred to me that it would be fun to do night poems in a variety of languages as a set. And so I then set the Neruda and, of course I’ve set Rilke many times, the Rose songs and others as well. And I found that particular poem [Sa Nuit d’Ete]. So the Donald Brinegar Singers premiered all three movements. But, as you know, in all my music, I gear everything in the music itself to all aspects of the text – the content, the language, when it was written, the style, everything about it.

So, Shining Night, of course, is a long lyric song and has its roots in the Broadway musical, and I love that. It’s part of my DNA. I grew up on that stuff. I love the long lyric lines that you can find that are memorable, that we cannot forget, and combined with superb texts. Every time I go to Pennsylvania, I stay at Oscar Hammerstein’s farm. It’s now a bed and breakfast, and you can imagine the ghosts there, the lyrics – “ThisNearly was Mine,” and everything from Oklahoma, South Pacific, and Showboat, and all of these things. And so I paired that great setting of Shining Night in a nice lyric style, much of this piece was actually written in my head on a road trip back from Santa Fe, and it came to me as a nice long lyric melody. The sketch of the melody goes from a D-flat, then to the E-flat, then to G-flat, then A, and A-flat. Then the opportunity to paint the word “shining,” and I do it two ways. The first is very melismatic, very blanket of broad sounds on that “shining,” to let that word shine. It’s what I call a “trigger” word, just needs special attention. And then on the repetition, I change that note into almost like a star, it’s above everything (sings the melody), and it all goes on underneath it. It’s a very memorable tune. It’s done all over the world. So I set that. And then I set the Neruda, as I say it’s more like a Chilean folksong, very very tender, with nice cadential extensions, and the men ending the various sections and then dividing the tune at the very end, when it comes back, so everyone gets a quarter of the tune itself, and then the more vibrant middle section. I’ve set Rilke many times. I’m painting a mysterious night in Paris in the 1920’s. That’s about when it was written. What I love about Rilke is that he forces you to use your imagination. So all of these images that he conjures up are very mysterious. I set it with jazz-tinged chords, very complex chords. When everything comes back, at the more exuberant section at the end - what I did with that one is, I simply looked back at all the motives in the
piece, and I simply did a lot of exercises in invertible counterpoint. I labeled each one of the motives (1-8, or 1-6, or whatever it was). What would it be if the first part if the sopranos had to measure of motive 3 followed by motive 5 and then were accompanied by the altos on motive 1. Kept on switching around and came up with the configuration that worked. And so then it ends very, very mysteriously. Then when I found that absolutely fabulous couplet at the end of it, to bring back the opening movements, tie it into Shining Night, and then end the piece mysteriously, as if night has fallen. So we have three very different approaches, and I’m very pleased with that set.

I remember going to the ACDA convention in Dallas (I just flew in from Copenhagen and was doing a tour over there). The fellow from Hal Leonard, said “Hey, come over here. I want to show you something.” And he showed me their nationwide sales, and Shining Night was right there at the top.

MO: This is one of the things of interest to me – how often Shining Night is performed, because it’s much more accessible, as opposed to something like Soneto de la Noche, which is not performed quite as often.

ML: Right, because it’s very difficult, and it’s in Spanish. Listen, if you want to hear a really great Soneto de la Noche, go on YouTube, and there’s a fantastic performance of that piece, done by memory, by (I believe) a Cuban choir. They’re doing a live performance in a church, conducted by a woman. And it’s absolutely spot on, and I’m very pleased with that performance. Now the thing with Shining Night. Listen to it when I do it with Voce in playing that. What there needs to be always – look, this stuff comes right off the Broadway stage - is a lot of flexibility with the tempo. I play that opening very freely. It’s different every time I do it. It absolutely drives me nuts when I hear… (sings a strict running eighth note version of the opening of Shining Night). And it just shows that the conductor and the pianist have no sense of where this thing begins. It should be flowing, it should be give and take, a push and pull all the way through. I find this stuff also in performances of O Magnum Mysterium and Lux Aeterna where people don’t understand that it comes straight out of chant and there should be a flexibility. There are no 8th notes. There is just a line, and that line is very elastic and flexible. So listen to my performance with Voce, and you’ll understand what I mean. And then keep an eye out for Deutsche Grammophone, and they’ll release the record to coincide with my birthday. It’s a very, very fine performance. The whole album is terrific. So yes, that’s what I want to hear in this flexibility… sings “Sure on This Shining Night” melody… goes on. I’m thinking about these whole archs of
melody (sings again, the whole A section). It’s right off the stage, and conductors have to understand that. They’re just so glued to the eighth notes.

So anyway, of course you might mention in your article, there’s a solo vocal version and mixed vocal duet version of Shining Night. But anyway, as you know from looking through all my music, whether it’s some of the thornier stuff such as the Madrigali, I’m still very much a lyric composer, I’m looking at the long line all the way through. So anyway, these are wonderful texts. One of my prized possessions is actually a letter written by Rilke in 1923 in French from Muzotte, to a woman, and he’s thanking her for flowers that she delivered to him. And he’s telling her in very eloquent language, including that her flowers are deliciously happy with him, inviting her to come to Muzotte the next springtime and pick flowers with him to replenish the ones that she gave him. But I love Rilke because he forces you to use your imagination. I love Neruda because of his tender love poems and the sonnets. And of course, the Shining Night … My friend, Don Brinegar (of the Don Brinegar Singers who premiered the work), was after me for years to set Shining Night, and I kept saying, “are you mad?!” The Barber setting is iconic! And he jokingly said, “Oh, I see. You’re the first person to ever set O Magnum Mysterium.” So I had to say to him, “Touché.” So I did it. And it was interesting when I told (the Brock commission chair) that I wanted the Donald Brinegar Singers to premier this. I had worked with Don, and they’re a very fine group here in L.A. He asked if I would reconsider because the featured choir at the convention was the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, and I said, “they’re great, but…no, I’m going to have the Donald Brinegar Singers do that.” And they did a very fine premier of that. It was actually interesting too, because the next piece on the program was a world premier of a piece commissioned by the Harvard Glee, and I had never heard it before, but they commissioned my Ave Dulcissima Maria, with conductor Marvin Jameson. Yes, I’m very fond of the Nocturnes. I get lots of emails about them. One of the very first recordings of Soneto was by the Santa Fe Desert Chorale. I have an original edition of the 100 Love Poems by Neruda on hand, and I was also working with the scholarly editions of the translations by Stephen Tapscott. And both of them use … the word is very, very stark with the “o” on the end of it – “cuando yo muero” not “muera”. Both of them use that, the original edition and the scholarly edition. It is a more general use to use “muera” at the end of it. But who am I to change Neruda? And I’ve had some very interesting discussions with people who are from Spain. There’s another level of understanding or “morar” than “moro.” But yes, find the recording on YouTUbe that is a knockout. She understands this piece, the give and take and flow. Another fine version of this is done by
Craig Hella Johnson and Conspirare. Check this one out. They did a recording, and that album got a Grammy nomination. But they also did a DVD, and while the choir is singing in the Spanish, a fellow comes out of the choir and speaks the English translation.

MO: After performing this work with several choral ensembles, what advice would you have for choral conductors?

ML: Just to understand the style, the flexibility of the tempo throughout is the crucial thing throughout. And you’ll see that in the recordings that I did with Voce.

MO: If you could transport the choir and the piano anywhere in the world, what is the ideal setting for these pieces.

ML: I’m sitting right now in my home in the San Juan Islands, and I can see across to Canada. And of course, I’m very much influenced on Shining Night (the film) by the stars. I’ve written a lot of music on a $50 piano in a shack by the beach by candlelight – Lux Aeterna, O Magnum, and other things. But look, “Shining Night” is a very pantheistic poem in its connection with nature – “all is healed, all is health.” I’ve been involved with performances of that all over the world, and of course, an ideal performance would be in a place closely connected with nature, possibly in the Pacific Northwest up here.

MO: Well, thank you so much for the opportunity to interview you. I do so appreciate you taking the time to talk with me. Have a lovely afternoon.

ML: You are very welcome, and good luck with your paper.
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“Epilogue: Voici le Soir” by Morten Lauridsen
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PART TWO:

CHORAL RECITALS
• University of Kentucky Women’s Choir Concert - Fall 2012
  Ogo Ni Fun Oluwa! – Rosephanye Powell

• Bluegrass Choral Music Festival (SATB Choir) - Fall 2013
  Domine fili unigenite (from *Gloria* RV 589) – Antonio Vivaldi
  Diffusa est gratia – Giovanni Maria Nanino
  Sarah – Newfoundland folk song, arr. Stephen Hatfield
  The Cloths of Heaven – Z. Randall Stroope
  He’ll Make a Way - Byron Smith

• UK Choristers present Night on Broadway – Spring 2013

• University of Kentucky Choristers - Fall 2013
  Domine ad adjuvandum me festina – Giovanni Battista Martini
  Saints Bound for Heaven – Traditional American
    arr. Alice Parker, Robert Shaw
  Hard Times Come Again No More – Stephen Foster, arr. Mark Keller
  All My Trials – Bohemian spiritual, arr. Stacey Gibbs
  Feller from Fortune – Newfoundland folk song, arr. Harry Somers
  Papa Loko – Traditional Haitian folk song, arr. Stan Källman
  He’ll Make a Way - Byron Smith

• UK Choristers present Night on Broadway: Around the World - Spring 2014

• University of Kentucky Choristers - Spring 2014
  CONCORD – American Shape Note hymn, ed. Maggie Owens
  Prší, prší – Traditional Slovakian folk song, arr. Miroslav Hronek
  Out of the Deep (from *Requiem*) – John Rutter
  Famine Song – VIDA, arr. Matthew Culloton
  Light of a Clear Blue Morning – Dolly Parton, arr. Craig Hella Johnson
Program Notes

Ogo Ni Fun Oluwa!

Text from the Yoruba language of Nigeria:
Ogo ni fun Oluwa,
Eyo, Ejo, Abi Jesu Kristi,
Irepo, Epâtewō, Alafia

Translation:
Glory to God in the Highest!
Rejoice, Dance, Jesus Christ is Born,
Unity, Clap, Peace

This piece, “Ogo Ni Fun Oluwa,” is often presented during the Christmas season due to the narrative of the newborn Jesus, but it also serves a purpose as an uplifting and exuberant expression of general praise.

This concert, presented by the University of Kentucky Women’s Choir, honors a wide variety of contemporary women composers, and composer Rosephanye Powell undoubtedly deserves a spot on this program.

Rosephanye Powell is a professor of choral music at Auburn University, where she also teaches voice. Dr. Powell is an acclaimed choral composer and clinician throughout the United States and abroad. While she is widely known as a vibrant arranger of African-American spirituals and African and Caribbean folk songs, especially for treble voice, she is also known for her original compositions, of which “Ogo Ni Fun Oluwa!” is one. She composed the words and music, and her husband, William Powell, arranged this piece for treble voices.68

68 Auburn University Faculty Directory: https://cla.auburn.edu/music/faculty-staff/rosephanye-powell/
With her husband, William Powell, Rosephanye Powell served as editor for the collection “Spirituals for Upper Voices” published by Oxford University Press. Her other notable choral works include: “Ascribe to the Lord,” “The Word was God,” “Still I Rise,” “Ning Wendete,” and “Soridad.” Her compositions and arrangements are primarily published by Gentry Publications (in the Rosephanye Powell Choral Series) and Hal Leonard (in the World Music Series).69

“Ogo Ni Fun Oluwa” presents an upbeat melody in 6/8 meter accompanied by percussion (notated for shekere and two djembes). The piece utilizes mostly homophonic texture throughout followed by a brief section of call and response with the sopranos calling out a line and the altos repeating the message. As the intensity heightens, the choir claps layered polyrhythms and chants the text, breaking out into more dense harmony, which concludes with a sonorous F major triad high in the vocal range followed by claps and chants of “Ogo ni fun Oluwa!”70

A video of the piece at this UK Women’s Choir concert can be found here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q9MTT54DWfM

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Domine Fili unigenite
(Movement VII from *Gloria* RV 589)

Latin text:
Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe.

English translation:
O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

An Italian violinist and composer of the Baroque era, Antonio Vivaldi resided primarily in Venice, Italy, where he worked extensively with the Ospedale della Pietà, one of four Venetian orphanages and schools. It was for this group of young women at the Ospedale della Pietà that Vivaldi composed his *Gloria* (RV 589). Due to both the joyful and penitent nature of this work and its accessibility for choir, soloists, and orchestra, Vivaldi’s *Gloria* (RV 589) has become one of the most well-known sacred choral works of all time.\(^{71}\)

The voicing of the chorus is a point of contention among choral scholars. Although Vivaldi wrote the work for SATB chorus, the young women of the Pieta served as the performers. There are many questions surrounding how this was executed with treble voices singing a work for mixed voices, and it is unlikely that the answer will ever be revealed.

*Gloria* contains twelve movements, which include:

1. Gloria in excelsis Deo
2. Et in terra pax - chorus
3. Laudamus te – soprano duet
4. Gratias agimus tibi - chorus
5. Propter magnam gloriam - chorus

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6. Domine Deus – soprano solo
7. Domine, Fili unigenite - chorus
8. Domine Deus, Agnus Dei – for contralto and chorus
9. Qui tollis peccata mundi - chorus
10. Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris – contralto solo
11. Quoniam tu solus sanctus - chorus
12. Cum Sancto Spiritu – chorus

The instrumentation for the work is for a chamber orchestra of oboe, trumpet, strings, and basso continuo. “Domine Fili unigenite” is the seventh movement of Gloria, and it is characterized by buoyant dotted rhythms and hemiola, both rhythmic devices that were popular in the Baroque era.

Vivaldi’s use of melody and countermelody are extremely important to the construction of this movement. The melody and countermelody consist of ten measures initially presented in F major by the alto and bass voices, respectively. Next, the soprano and tenor voices present the same melody and countermelody material up a fifth in the dominant key area. The melody, countermelody, and harmonizations of those entities continue for the duration of the piece. Vivaldi makes excellent use of compositional techniques such as dovetailing of phrases, variance of phrase length, and inversion of the melody and countermelody to provide variety and interest. He closes out the movement with the same ten measures of instrumental ritornello that appeared in the opening of the movement.72

Diffusa est gratia

Giovanni Maria Nanino
(1543-1607)

Latin text:
Diffusa est gratia in labiis tuis:
propterea benedixit te Deus in aeternum.
Myrrha, et gutta, et casia a vestimentis tuis,
ex gradibus eburneis;
ex quibus delectaverunt te filiae regum in honore tuo.

English translation:
Grace flows from your lips,
For this reason, God has blessed you forever.
Myrrh, nataph, and cinnamon perfume they garments,
From the houses of ivory,
From which daughters of kings delighted thee in thy honor.73

The text for “Diffusa est gratia” is derived from Psalm 44, verse 3, and the subject of the text is Mary, the Mother of God. This text is often used in the Catholic church for feast days and solemnities of Mary.

“Diffusa est gratia” is a work of Renaissance polyphony for four-part mixed voices (SATB). In the opening lines, Nanino utilizes descending melodic lines to unfold expressive text painting on the words “flows from your lips.” In the next phrase, on the text “For this reason, God has blessed you,” the vocal lines proclaim this text, first in duet with the soprano and alto voices paired, which is then echoed by the pairing of tenor and bass voices. Another four-part section of polyphony unfolds, as the voices sing about the spices that will adorn Mary’s garments. All four voices arrive together at the final

syllable of “tuis” at the downbeat of m. 23, which is rare in polyphony and provides the first of two homophonic cadences of the piece.

As with most music of the Renaissance, “Diffusa est gratia” is modal, and this piece exists primarily in the Aeolian mode based on A. As early as the third measure, the leading tone of G-sharp begins to appear as an accidental, with other accidentals such as C-sharp and B-flat appearing occasionally throughout the piece to add effect to the text, to provide the pull of a leading tone prior to a cadence, and to hint at other modal areas. The final two bars close out the piece in homophony, ending with a Picardy third in the soprano voice and an A major triad.⁷⁴

Text:

I came upon a charmin’ girl, an’ Sarah is her name. 
Her parents want the husband with riches, wealth, an’ fame. 
I haven’t the riches, wealth, an’ fame have never come my way, ‘til the night I went to visit my love an’ through the keyhole say:

Refrain: Sarah, Sarah, won’t you come out tonight?  
Sarah, Sarah, the moon is shinin’ bright. 
Put yer hat and jacket on, tell yer mother you won’t be long, 
An’ I’ll be waitin’ for you round the corner.

Now Sarah is a girl like this, a girl you’ll seldom see, 
She loves me only for me-self, an’ not for my money. 
And every night at eight o’clock, she puts her needle away, 
An’ standing just outside the door an’ through the keyhole say. 
(Refrain) 
One night after eight, I crept to the door. 
I whispered “Sarah darling” as I’d often done before. 
“I’ll give you Sarah!” said a voice 
As down I went a-flop.
An’ her mother sang as she kicked me carcass all around her shop. 
(Refrain) 
Her mother thought she’d finished me an’ I let her think so too. 
As I lay there groaning on the floor, I scarce knew what to do. 
At last she said, “Alive or dead, my girl I’ll let ‘im wed.” 
Then up I jumps, says, “Thank you Ma’am!” an’ to me girl I said. 
(Refrain)

Newfoundland is an island that makes up part of the Eastern-most province of Canada. The island is home to the richest and most original musical folk tradition in Canada outside of Quebec. Newfoundland is known for its rich folk music traditions made up of shanties, jigs, ballads and reels - songs and dances from the folk music traditions of England, Scotland, and Ireland. It is from this rich tradition of folk music that the song “Sarah” is derived. It is a beloved folk song in Newfoundland and a staple at
song-swapping sessions. The story tells a tale of comic romance as a young couple tries to outwit the girl’s fiery mother.  

Composer, Stephen Hatfield, is a resident of Vancouver Island, where he composes mostly theatrical music. He has taught band, choir, vocal jazz, guitar, and piano. He is noted for exciting arrangements of world music, and for his original works that weave influences from a variety of cultures to create a new style of cultural fusion.

“Sarah” is a unique piece voiced for mixed voices without accompaniment. Vocal divisi is prevalent in the treble voices but non-existent in the lower voices, which is a characteristic that is much sought after by choir directors at the high school level. The vocal patterns themselves drive the rhythm throughout. For this performance, a bodhrán (Irish frame drum) will be used to help keep the rhythms together and to add even more rhythmic interest. The use of dotted rhythms, triplets, and “Scotch snap” rhythms throughout the piece create rhythmic flair and heighten the upbeat and mischievous nature of the story.

75 Glenn Colton. “She’s Like the Swallow: Creative Responses to Newfoundland Folksong in the Choral Music of Harry Somers.” _The Phenomenon of Singing_ 3 (2013): 71-82.

76 Stephen Hatfield bio: https://www.singers.com/bio/2934

The Cloths of Heaven

Z. Randall Stroope
(b. 1953)

Text:
Had I the heavens’ embroidered cloths,
Enwrought with golden and silver light,
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half-light,
I would spread the cloths under your feet:
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

The text for this piece is a poem, “He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven” by Scottish poet William Butler Yeats (1865-1939). This poem is one of the most popular poems in W.B. Yeats’s canon, but it is also one of the shortest, consisting of only eight lines. The most popular of Yeats’s poems is “The Lake Isle of Innisfree,” which is also a popular text for choral compositions, with choral settings by Eleanor Daley, Ola Gjeilo, and David Brunner, to name a few.

Z. Randall Stroope is an American composer, conductor and university professor who has conducted 44 all-state choirs. He is a renowned composer with popular choral titles such as “Homeland,” “Omnia Sol,” “Lamentations of Jeremiah,” and “Psalm 23” to name a few. “The Cloths of Heaven” is part of the Z. Randall Stroope Choral Series with Colla Voce Music.

Nov 6, 2015.

79 Z. Randall Stroope bio: https://www.collavoce.com/composers-arrangers/item/z-stroope
“The Cloths of Heaven” is a lovely, expressive piece for SATB voices with piano accompaniment. Firmly rooted in F-sharp minor, the piece is in ternary form. After returning to the original melody and the first line of the poem, he includes a codetta to finish with repetitions of the phrase, “Tread softly, you tread on my dreams.”

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He’ll Make a Way

Byron J. Smith (b. 1960)

Text:
I know the Lord will make a way. Oh yes!
If you trust and never doubt, He will bring you out!
I know the Lord will make a way.
Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a soul like me.
  His mercy’s everlasting, His truth endures,
  And He sent His son to set me free!
  He’s there, and He cares for me.
  He cares, and He’ll set you free.
Trust and never doubt, He will bring you out!
Swing down chariot, God will make a way!
My Lord what a mornin, He’ll make a way!
Trust in Him, He’ll show you the way!

Composer, Byron J. Smith is a native of Los Angeles, and serves as an Associate Professor of Music at Los Angeles Harbor College, where he teaches courses in commercial music, music industry, and songwriting. “He’ll Make a Way” is a gospel piece that was written by Byron Smith for the professional vocal ensemble he founded and directs, the Spirit Chorale of Los Angeles. The Spirit Chorale has been together for over 20 years, and a major tenet of their mission is to preserve music of African-American composer, especially the Negro spiritual. The Spirit Chorale frequently performs compositions by some of their favorite composers including Jester Hairston, Hall Johnson, Undine Smith Moore, Moses Hogan, and Richard Jackson.

“He’ll Make a Way” is written for mixed choir with solo with piano accompaniment. The addition of bass guitar and drum set heighten the rhythmic drive and

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81 Byron J. Smith bio: http://spiritchorale.com/director.htm

82 Spirit Chorale bio: http://spiritchorale.com/biography.htm
are appropriate for performance of gospel music. Byron Smith has composed many other popular gospel compositions, including “Worthy to be Praised” and “Shout Glory.”

“He’ll Make a Way” opens with a vibrant piano solo whose pitches and rhythms are later echoed by the choir in bell tones on “I know, I know, I know the Lord will make a way.” The piece is upbeat and mostly at a dynamic of *mezzo forte* or louder throughout. Just when the piece couldn’t get any more joyful, it is likely that the choir will erupt into clapping on beats two and four by page 11 when the choir sings and repeats “make a way” together. A hallmark of Smith’s style (and of gospel style) is an additive vamp section where all voice parts have a melody, and one part comes in with that melody, then another part adds their melody, then the next part, and then the next part, as they crescendo together. This is meant to be an improvisational section where the soloist can riff, the instrumentation can be removed and then come back, and repeat as many times as the director wants. After the vamp, the choir sings again in four part harmony and finishes the piece with a bang. The goal is praise and worship through music, and Byron Smith’s music always ensures that the performers and audience will be feeling the spirit by the end of the piece!

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Domine ad adjuvandum me festina  

Latin text:
Domine, ad adjuvandum me festina.  
Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto,  
sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper  

English translation:
Lord God, make haste to help me now.  
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost:  
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,  
World without end, Amen. Alleluia.  

“Il Padre” G.B. Martini was, in his own lifetime, one of the most famous musical figures of the 18th century. He studied music from an early age, and was appointed as maestro di cappella in a Franciscan monastery in Bologna, Italy, in 1722. Martini was revered as a music historian and teacher. In Bologna, he founded a music school, where his most famous pupils included W.A. Mozart and J.C. Bach. “Domine ad adjuvandum me festina” was likely composed in 1729.\(^{84}\)  

“Domine ad adjuvandum me festina” is composed for SATB choir, SATB soloists, and chamber orchestra. The source of the text is Psalm 69, verse 2. The work begins with a slow tempo and is doubled *collega parte* by the strings. After the first six measures, the tempo drastically changes from *largo* to *allegro e spicco*, which means quick and detached. The strings take off with a five measure polyphonic introduction, and the choir comes in on the theme in b minor with a homophonic texture, together at first, then the soprano voice takes over as the melody with alto, tenor, and bass accompanying.\(^{84}\)

\(^{84}\) Teacher and Mentor, Padre Martini: https://mozartcircle.wordpress.com/2017/12/01/impossible-interviews-october-2017-mozarts-teacher-mentor-padre-martini/
A solo soprano and solo tenor have an eight measure duet section. The chorus soon returns with the original theme presented in the dominant key of F-sharp minor (voiced down a fourth for the choir). This time the alto voice has the melody. Next, there is an eleven measure trio section with solo soprano, tenor, and bass. At m. 45, the tonality of b minor returns, as does the soprano voice accompanied by the choral counterparts alto, tenor, and bass. The alto soloist hasn’t sung yet, but never fear, she gets the best solo. The alto solo is in the relative major key of D major. The solo is fifteen measures long and is quite virtuosic with many melismas. The choir now enters in f-sharp minor with the declamatory text “sicut erat” in a predominantly homophonic texture. Martini brings the tonality back to b minor and introduces a fugue, beginning with the alto voices on the subject followed by the tenors on the countersubject. The fugue modulates to the dominant and back again, and the piece closes out with an eight measure polyphonic “Amen.” The choir finishes with an “Alleluia” and a Picardy third in the alto voice.\footnote{G.B. Martini “Domine, ad adjuvandum me festina.” John Castellini, ed. Concordia Publishing House, 1958.}
Saints Bound for Heaven

Traditional American song
arr. Alice Parker (b. 1925)
and Robert Shaw (1916-1999)

Text:
Our bondage it shall end by and by,
From Egypt's yoke set free,
Hail the glorious jubilee,
And to Canaan we'll return by and by.

Our Deliv'rer He shall come by and by,
And our sorrows have an end,
With our three-score years and ten,
And vast glory crown the day by and by.

And when to Jordan's floods we are come,
Jehovah rules the tide,
And the waters He'll divide,
And the ransom'd host shall shout, "We are come."

Then with all the happy throng we'll rejoice,
Shouting glory to our King,
Till the vaults of heaven ring,
And thro' all eternity we'll rejoice.

American choral legends, Robert Shaw and Alice Parker, created two hundred and twenty-three choral arrangements in their collaboration that spanned several decades. Though these folk hymns were originally not intended to be sung by a choir in a concert hall, the Parker-Shaw arrangements preserve the spirit of the original hymn while making good use of the resources of a four-part chorus, providing a large body of excellent choral repertoire. 86

The Parker-Shaw arrangements have been popular over the years with choral conductors and singers because they are well-crafted, exuberant and fun, and enjoyable to listen to. Their accessibility makes them excellent vehicles for training developing singers in the art of four-part a cappella singing, particularly in building skills in contrapuntal independence, text expression, and rhythmic vitality and precision.

Although most of the Parker-Shaw arrangements were written for SATB chorus, there are several written for TTBB chorus as well. “Saints Bound for Heaven,” which is one of the most popular hymns, is one of that is also available for TTBB and SSAA voices. The ranges in the SATB version are accessible for high school voices, and no aspect of pitch, rhythm, or harmony in the arrangement makes it terribly difficult. The difficulty within these American folk hymn arrangements lies in being able to achieve a fullness of tone and a bright, forward tone that carries and captures the spirit of a hopeful American pioneer.87

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Text:
Let us pause in life’s pleasures and count its many tears,
    While we all sup sorrow with the poor:
There’s a song that will linger forever in our ears;
    Oh! Hard times come again no more!
    It’s the song, the sigh of the weary.
Hard times, hard times come again no more.
Many days you have lingered around my cabin door,
    Oh! Hard times come again no more.
While we seek mirth and beauty and music light and gay,
    There are frail forms fainting at the door:
Though their voices are silent their pleading looks will say:
    Oh! Hard times come again no more.

“Hard Times (Come Again No More)” was written by Stephen Foster in 1854 and published the next year in New York under the title “Foster’s Melodies No 28.” Foster was immensely popular as a songwriter during his short lifetime. Although he only lived to be thirty-eight years old, he is credited with composing nearly 300 songs, including memorable pieces such as “Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair,” “My Old Kentucky Home,” and “Camptown Races.” Many of his songs had Southern themes, but Foster never really lived in the South.  

The melody for “Hard Times” is simple, sweet, and sentimental and can be upbeat or long and sustained. This choral arrangement by Mark Keller calls for an upbeat

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version, marking the tempo at 104 beats per minute. Mark Keller wrote this arrangement specifically for American choral legend, Dale Warland and his professional choir, the Dale Warland Singers. This arrangement is quite short if taken at the suggested tempo. One might consider either taking the piece at a slower tempo or adding a solo or repeat to elongate it. This arrangement possesses a wide dynamic range from piano all the way to fortississimo (fff). 89

All My Trials

Bohemian spiritual
arr. Stacey Gibbs

Text:
All my trials, Lord, soon be over.
If religion was a thing that money could buy,
The rich would live and the poor would die.
All my trials, Lord, soon be over.
To late, my brother,
To late, but nevermind.
Now hush little baby, don’a you cry,
You know that man is born to die.
All my trials, Lord, soon be over.

“All My Trials” is based on a Bahamian lullaby that tells the story of a mother on her death bed, comforting her children, The message that no matter how difficult the situation seemed, the struggle would “soon be over,” propelled the song to the status of an anthem during the civil rights movement. Joan Baez released “All My Trials” in 1960 (during the American Folk Revival) on an album entitled “The Joan Baez Songbook,” which brought the song into public consciousness.90

In the choral world, the tried and true choral arrangement of “All My Trials” was composed by Norman Luboff. This arrangement by Stacey Gibbs is vastly different and is part of the Jo-Michael Scheibe choral series with Colla Voce Music. “All My Trials” is often categorized as a spiritual due to its religious imagery, and Stacey Gibbs’s arrangement puts an African-American spiritual spin on it due to jazz-influenced harmonies, syncopation, and plaintive weeping motives. The bell tone entrances on “soon” and the tenor 16th note weeping motive in the chorus on “all” pull at the

90 Stephen Griffith, “Folk Song Index: All My Trials.”
http://www.stephengriffith.com/folksongindex/all-my-trials-traditional/
heartstrings. This arrangement, however, isn’t all hushed. The choir has the opportunity to let loose on the \textit{forte} dynamics and beautifully voiced chords on “too late.” The piece builds to an operatic flourish in mm. 53-56 with ascending 16\textsuperscript{th} notes in a trio of SSA voices.\footnote{Stacey V. Gibbs, “All My Trials.” Colla Voce Music, 2011.}

Stacey V. Gibbs is a composer and arranger best known for his vibrant, innovative arrangements of spirituals. He is acclaimed for upholding the authenticity and power of spirituals while adding new energy and ideas to them. His setting of \textit{Way Over in Beulah Land}’ was performed at the 57th Inaugural Service for President Barack Obama. Gibbs currently resides in Detroit, Michigan.\footnote{Stacey V. Gibbs bio: \url{https://www.carlfischer.com/composer/gibbs-stacey/}}
Feller from Fortune

Newfoundland folk song
arr. Harry Somers (1925-1999)

Text:

Oh, there's lots of fish in Bonavist' harbour,
Lots of fish right in around here'
Boys and girls are fishin' together'
Forty-five from Carbonear.

Chorus:
Oh, catch-a-hold this one, catch-a-hold that one
Swing around this one, swing around she;
Dance around this one, dance around that one
Diddle-dum this one, diddle-dum dee.

Oh, Sally is the pride of Cat Harbour,
Ain't been swung since last year,
Drinkin' rum and wine and cassis
What the boys brought home from St Pierre.

Oh, Sally goes to church every Sunday
Not for to sing nor for to hear,
But to see the feller from Fortune
What was down here fishin' the year.

Chorus
Oh, Sally's got a bouncin' new baby,
Father said that he didn't care,
'Cause she got that from the feller from Fortune
What was down here fishin' the year.

Chorus
Oh, Uncle George got up in the mornin',
He got up in an 'ell of a tear
And he ripped the arse right out of his britches
Now he's got ne'er pair to wear.

Chorus
Oh, there's lots of fish in Bonavist' Harbour,
Lots of fishermen in around here;
Swing your partner, Jimmy Joe Jacobs,
I'll be home in the spring of the year.

Harry Somers (1925-1999) was a Canadian composer who held a lifelong interest in folk music from around the world and, like many Canadian composers of his generation, felt a special attraction to the diverse musical traditions of his country.
When Canadian song collector, Kenneth Peacock (1922-2000), published “Songs of the Newfoundland Outports” in 1965 with the National Museum of Canada, Somers had found the material he needed. These songs, as collected by Peacock, were notated from performances heard in Newfoundland in the 1950s and 1960s. From this collection, Somers chose five songs as the basis for his creative arrangements:


Somers had taken these songs, two of which most Newfoundlanders had never heard of before, and completely reworked them in rhythm, texture, and tonality. At the concert at which these pieces premiered, the audience was “transfixed by two things: the newness of something that had seemed so unchangeable and the absolute, immediate knowledge that the approach was dead right.”

“Feller from Fortune” is a rollicking piece that is predominantly in 7/8 but also shifts to 3/8, 9/8, 2/4, 6/8, 5/8, and back again. The piano accompaniment supports the singers with a playful accompaniment. There is no written percussion part, but tambourine or a frame drum would be appropriate. This is a wonderful teaching piece for shifting meter, for dynamics, and quick text declamation, although it is quite difficult. The piece tells a story, there are plenty of nonsense syllables, “do, dee, dum” that make this piece a fun time for singers and audience alike.

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94 Colton, 80.

As mentioned in the inside cover of the piece, Papa Loko is an old and respected Vodou spirit, originally worshiped by the Taino tribe, the natives of Haiti before the French arrived with their African slaves. The Voudou religion has become a blend of Christianity and West African beliefs due to generations of intermarriage of the Haitian natives (the Taino tribe), the French colonials, and the West African slaves brought by the French. Vodou is practiced mainly by poorer, rural Haitians as a way of creating a collective community between the extended family and the nature spirits that they believe respond to singing, dancing, and drumming. Papa Loko is the healing power connected to trees and leaves and is the father of all priests, and this song is an attempt to communicate with him and give him thanks.  

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This piece begins with a wood flute ostinato, imitating the wind whispering through the trees. A solo voice then calls out to Papa Loko a cappella, echoed freely by other soloists. When the percussion enters at m. 24 and the bass voices enter at m. 28, the tempo builds slightly but is still relaxed in a lilting 6/8 meter. At m. 57, there is a transition section where voice parts layer in, the tempo and dynamics build into the drastic shift at m. 65, which is marked “Fast and Aggressive” as a soloist sings as raucous and celebratory Carnival enters. The piece continues as a Carnival celebration and ends with joy and enthusiasm. There are multiple opportunities for repeats and improvisation, which can either lengthen or shorten the piece, and add opportunities for more solos, if need be.

This piece is notated for five percussionists and is more successful with more instruments. There is a percussion guide in the back of the octavo for help on how to find drums that will achieve the desired effect and come close to those that would be used for a Vodou song in Haiti. Generally, a medium djembe, a tubano, a shekere, Agogo bells, and bongos or small djembe is a combination that works well for this piece.
CONCORD

American Shape Note hymn
ed. Maggie Owens

The men of grace have found glory begun below,
Celestial fruits on earthly ground from faith and hope may grow.

The hill of Zion yields a thousand sacred sweets,
Before we reach the heav’nly fields, or walk the golden streets.

Then let our songs abound, and ev’ry tear be dry,
We’re marching through Immanuel’s ground to fairer worlds on high.

CONCORD is hymn #313t in the Sacred Harp hymnal. It is a traditional hymn in the shape-note tradition. Nineteenth century American songbooks that used notes in different shapes to aid singers and teach singing came to be known as “shape-note hymnals.” Among the most notable of these hymnals was B.F. White’s The Sacred Harp, published in Georgia in 1844.\(^\text{97}\)

Shape-note singing is characterized by a particular formation called the “hollow square,” in which the conductor stands at the center, and sopranos sit on one side of the square, altos on another, tenors, on another, and basses on another. In traditional shape-note notation, there are four shapes, and each shape corresponds with a pitch in the scale and a certain solfege syllable. In a seven-note scale, ascending, the solfege in order would be fa, sol, la, fa, sol, la, mi. Triangle shaped notes represent “fa.” Circle shaped notes represent “sol.” Square-shaped notes represent “la,” and diamond-shaped notes represent “mi” (which is the leading tone). The first time singing through a hymn, the group sings it

on the solfege (“fasola”) to practice. Then they launch into the words. Shape-note singing originated in New England but became much more popular in the South, as it evolved into a dual-purpose event – for both religion and for socializing.  

Beyond being a system for writing hymns, shape-note singing became a style of singing, in which the tone is very forward, like one is calling out from a long distance. Vowels are spread more than they would be in traditional singing of choral music. Often, tenors and sopranos sing one another’s voice part either up or down the octave, which thickens the texture of the harmony. Lastly, there is very little sweetness or sublety to the vocal tone. It is brazen and bold singing with the full voice and spirit.

When seeking to recreate this experience in a university choral setting, it is necessary to “unteach” some behaviors, such as classical vowel modification, head voice, not scooping, etc. Scooping is common practice in shape-note singing. The more fervent one feels about the song, the more scooping there will be. Also, the bass voices often slide down into descending leaps leading into a cadence or on the last time through a hymn. The choir will take the pitch from the leader by humming it loudly until everyone has the pitch. Although the hymn is written in four parts, the technique of splitting the tenors and sopranos should be utilized. Take volunteers or the best sight readers and have the sopranos sing the tenor part up the octave and the tenors sing the soprano part down the octave.

If interested in learning more about shape-note singing, follow this link to find a local singing gathering and join in: http://home.olemiss.edu/~mudws/regular.html

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Prší, prší
(Raining, Raining)

Traditional Slovakian folk song
arr. Miroslav Hronek

Slovak text:
Prší, prší len sa lejenezatváraj milá dvere.
Milá má duša má nezatváraj pred nama.

Keď som išiel od Zuzičky, štrngali mi podkovičky.
štrngali, brngali, sivé očká plakali.

Sivé očká, čo plačete, veď vy moje nebudete,
budete iného šuhajička švárneho.

English translation:
It’s raining, raining, pouring down;
My dear, don’t shut the door on our love.

When I was leaving Zuzka’s house, my spurs jingled and jangled,
But the sky turned dark and poured rain, like tears from its gray eyes,

St. John, I beg you, even though father and mother object,
I must have my girl!

This Slovak folk song is a traditional folk song for children that has been arranged
by Miroslav Hronek for a cappella SATB chorus with divisi. The text is set syllabically,
and the tempo is very fast. Thus, it is a Slovak tongue twister for choirs. The piece is
quite comical in that it sounds very impressive and is difficult to master, especially at a
very fast tempo, but in most performances, it only lasts 60 seconds or less. The
arrangement ends with some fun nonsense syllables to round it all out – “tra la la la,
plum, plum.”

99 Miroslav Hronek, “Prší, prší.” Alliance Publications.
Out of the Deep

(Movement II from *Requiem*)

Text from Psalm 130:

Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice.
O let thine ears consider well the voice of my complaint.
If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it?

For there is mercy with thee: therefore shalt thou be feared.
I look for the Lord; my soul doth wait for him; and in his word is my trust.
My soul fleeth unto the Lord before the morning watch;
I say, before the morning watch.

O Israel, trust in the Lord;
for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.
And he shall redeem Israel from all his sins.

John Rutter composed *Requiem* in 1985 and dedicated it to the memory of my father, who had died the previous year. Rutter said that, in writing it, he was influenced and inspired by the example of Faure. Although there are no specific musical resemblances that can be traced, he remarks that “Faure's *Requiem* crystallized my thoughts about the kind of Requiem I wanted to write: intimate rather than grandiose, contemplative and lyric rather than dramatic, and ultimately moving towards light rather than darkness.” Following the precedent established by Brahms and Fauré, among others, it is not strictly a setting of the Requiem Mass as laid down in Catholic liturgy, but instead is made up of a personal selection of texts, some taken from the Requiem Mass and some from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. The seven-movement *Requiem* is in an arch-like form with the joyous “Sanctus” as the middle pinnacle of the work.
“Out of the Deep” is the second movement in the *Requiem*. The text is from Psalm 130, which is text often read or sung at Anglican funerals. It begins darkly with an unaccompanied cello solo in C minor, which later opens up to an uplifting C major when the choir sings “with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption” as if rays of sunshine are shining down with God’s mercy.\(^{100}\) The movement closes with a return to the key area of C minor and solo cello descending into the depths and ending on a sustained and mournful C2.\(^{101}\)

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Text:
Ease my spirit, ease my soul,
please free my hands from the barren soil.
Ease my mother, ease my child,
earth and sky be reconciled.
Weave my mother, weave my child,
Weave your baskets of rushes wild.
Weave my mother, weave my child.
Weave your baskets of rushes wild.
Out of heat, under sun comes the hunger to everyone.
Famine’s teeth, famine’s claw on the sands of Africa.
Rain, rain, rain.

Famine Song is a unique musical work for a cappella choir written by a professional vocal quartet of women named VIDA, based out of Bloomington, Indiana. This work was inspired by the stories of Sudanese basket weavers who expressed messages of both pain and hope during the famine of the 1980s. In the midst of hardship, a wonderful new sense of creativity emerged when women began weaving baskets as a means of survival. “Famine Song” blends haunting pleas for rain and provides encouragement to the basket weavers with a Bulgarian-influenced lament section over block chords. The work closes with the rain finally pouring down to end the famine, which is simulated by the choir members snapping their fingers, starting slowly at first then building into a thunderstorm. This effect, as well as the story and this setting by composer Matthew Culloton, is chilling and memorable.102

Light of a Clear Blue Morning

Dolly Parton
(b. 1946)
arr. Craig Hella Johnson

Text:
It's been a long dark night,
And I've been a waitin' for the morning.
It's been a long hard fight,
But I see a brand new day a dawning.
I've been looking for the sunshine.
You know I ain't seen it in so long,
But everything's gonna work out just fine.
And everything's gonna be all right
'Cause I can see the light of a clear blue morning.
I can see the light of a brand new day.
I can see the light of a clear blue morning.
Everything's gonna be all right
It's gonna be okay.

“Light of a Clear Blue Morning” was originally written by Dolly Parton in 1977 in response to struggles surrounding her split from a longtime musical and business partner. In her 1994 autobiography, *My Life and Other Unfinished Business*, she writes:

“As I left [Porter Wagoner’s] office and began to drive toward my home out on Crockett Road, it began to rain. So did I. I cried, not so much out of a sense of loss, but from the pain that always comes from change. It was a sad kind of freedom. Then I began to sing a song to myself.”¹⁰³ Thus, the song “Light of a Clear Blue Morning” was born. Her most famous song, “I Will Always Love You” was also written about the split from her partnership with Porter Wagoner.

Craig Hella Johnson is the Artistic Director of professional choral ensembles Conspirare (of Austin, TX) and Vocal Arts Ensemble (of Cincinnati, OH). Johnson is not

only a dynamic choral director but an innovative composer as well, bringing the rhythmic intensity and harmonic structure of pop and folk music to the choral idiom. His music is published through G. Schirmer, Alliance, and Hal Leonard. In his arrangement of “Light of a Clear Blue Morning,” the simple message of hope shines through. Any C-instrument (such as violin) can be used if a soprano recorder is not available. The most memorable section of this work is the repeated vamp section in which the vocal parts layer together, and the melodies weave in and out of one another perfectly. It begins softly with the bass line alone, then the tenor, then a trio of upper voices which add a gospel flavor. After the vocal flourish of the vamp section, the arrangement gently relaxes into a reflective conclusion, drawing us to the new day dawning.\textsuperscript{104}

Margaret Blair Owens, conductor

DOCTORAL LECTURE RECITAL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS DEGREE
IN CHORAL CONDUCTING
UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

Saturday, November 11, 2017
3:00pm
Christ Church Cathedral
Louisville, Kentucky

Program

O Magnum Mysterium..........................................................Morten Lauridsen (b. 1943)

O great mystery, and wondrous sacrament,
that animals should see the new-born Lord, lying in their manger!
Blessed is the Virgin whose womb was worthy to bear the Lord Jesus Christ.
Alleluia!

Dirait-on..................................................................................Morten Lauridsen
(from Les Chansons des Roses)

Abandon surrounding abandon,
Tenderness touching tenderness...
Your oneness endlessly caresses itself, so they say;

Self-caressing through its own clear reflection.
Thus you invent the theme of Narcissus fulfilled.

Nocturnes........................................................................Morten Lauridsen

I. Sa Nuit d'Été

If, with my burning hands, I could melt
the body surrounding your lover's heart,
ah! How the night would become translucent,
taking it for a late star,
which, from the first moments of the world,
was forever lost, and which begins its course
with its blonde light, trying to reach out towards
its first night, its night, its summer night.

II. Soneto de la Noche

When I die, I want your hands upon my eyes:
I want the light and wheat of your beloved hands
to pass their freshness over me one more time:
I want to feel the gentleness that changed my destiny.

I want you to live while I wait for you, asleep,
I want your ears to still hear the wind,
I want you to smell the scent of the sea we both loved,
and to continue walking on the sand we walked on.
I want all that I love to keep on living,
And you whom I loved and sang above all things
To keep flowering into full bloom,

So that you can touch all that my love provides you,
So that my shadow may pass over your hair,
So that all may know the reason for my song.

III. Sure on this Shining Night

Sure on this shining night
Of starmade shadows round,
Kindness must watch for me
This side the ground.

The late year lies down the north.
All is healed, all is health.
High summer holds the earth.
Hearts all whole.

Sure on this shining night
I weep for wonder
Wand’ring far alone
Of shadows on the stars.

IV. Epilogue: Voici le Soir

Night has come:
for one whole day again I’ve loved you so much,
stirring hills.

It’s beautiful to see.
But: to feel in the lining of closed eyelids
the sweetness of having seen...

Choir Personnel

Soprano 1  Soprano 2  Alto 1  Alto 2
Emily Furnish  Katie Cook  Carrie Arrastia  Hyunjin Kwak
Suzanne Wilmot  Marissa Pollock  Sarita Gustely  Regan MacNay

Tenor 1  Tenor 2  Bass 1  Bass 2
Andrew Miller  Nick Johnson  Jacob Cook  Mark Benz
Jeremy Rhodes  Joseph Wrightson  Daniel Gilliam  Mike Owens

Piano
Mark Benz

UK School of Music  CFA  UK College of Fine Arts  UK University of Kentucky
MORTEN LAURIDSEN'S CHORAL CYCLE, NOCTURNES:

A CONDUCTOR'S ANALYSIS

LECTURE RECITAL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DOCTOR IN MUSICAL ARTS DEGREE

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

Margaret Blair Owens

November 11, 2017
Lecture Recital Program Notes

I. Overview of Lauridsen

Today’s performance will feature various works by Morten Lauridsen, most notably, his *Nocturnes*. Lauridsen is an American composer, who is notable for his tenure in Los Angeles as professor of composition and later department chair at University of Southern California’s Thornton School of Music.

Lauridsen’s earliest works, such as *Madrigali* and some movements of the *Mid-Winter Songs* were often quite dissonant and sometimes atonal. In later works, he became more influenced by the melodic contour of Gregorian chant and the way the music and the text enhance one another. His post as composer-in-residence with the Los Angeles Master Chorale with Paul Salamunovich, whose expertise is chant, helped to facilitate this evolution.

Lauridsen himself has referred to his use of added tones as “added-note triads”, in which the interval of a 2nd or a 4th is added to the triad. However, the added tones are simply for color, not for function. Whereas an added 9th chord would typically, in common practice harmony, need to be resolved downward by stepwise motion, Lauridsen’s added 2nd exists in close relation to the other pitches in the chord and does not feel the necessary pull toward resolution. It merely exists, hanging in the air, without push or pull in one direction or another. These harmonic seconds color much of Lauridsen’s body of work. In an interview for the Los Angeles Times, Lauridsen...
comments, “I have used a lot of major seconds and ninths, intervals I regard as ‘warm.’”

In his dissertation on Eric Whitacre, Andrew Larson, created a new analytical system called “textural density variation,” in which he purports that by increasing the number of pitches in chords, the composer creates momentum. The similarities of Whitacre and Lauridsen have been noted by many, and Larson’s theory of replacing or taking precedence over traditional harmonic function with the analysis of textural density variation is an intriguing principle. Lauridsen often adds one non-chord tone per triad, but as he builds toward a musical climax, more harmonic seconds are added.

Although his style is notable for its lush harmonic sonorities, it is of interest that rhythm is a consistent element in Lauridsen’s work in that he often uses an eighth note as the constant pulsing unit, and the note values are elongated as a phrase nears its end, sometimes with an additional marking of ritardendo or molto ritardendo. Often, he writes a more rhythmically involved melody while the other voices maintain the steady pulsing foundation. This concept is especially evident in “Dirait-on” and “Sure on this Shining Night,” which are two of Lauridsen’s most popular works. The majority of Lauridsen’s works are in a slow tempo, and those in a quicker tempo contain slow sections or multiple fermati and ritardandi to slow the forward motion that often comes with the rhythmic motion of constant 8\textsuperscript{th} notes. Thus, it is apparent that he prefers for the sound to linger in the air a little longer, especially at cadences, and the conductor should allow for more tempo rubato to be infused into each phrase. In order to convey this to conductors

and performers, Lauridsen writes many rhythmic and tempo alterations. Within the first twenty-two measures of “Soneto de la Noche” (the second movement of nocturnes, there are eight rhythmic or tempo alterations.

When I received the distinct privilege of conducting a phone interview with Morten Lauridsen, he made this comment regarding “Sure on this Shining Night:”

Now the thing with Shining Night - what there needs to be always – look, this stuff comes right off the Broadway stage - is a lot of flexibility with the tempo. I play that opening very freely. It’s different every time I do it. It absolutely drives me nuts when I hear... (sings a strict running eighth note version of the opening of Shining Night). And it just shows that the conductor and the pianist have no sense of where this thing begins. It should be flowing, it should be give and take, a push and pull all the way through. I find this stuff also in performances of O Magnum Mysterium and Lux Aeterna where people don’t understand that it comes straight out of chant and there should be a flexibility. There are no 8th notes. There is just a line, and that line is very elastic and flexible.¹⁰⁶

Lauridsen often sets a long, disjunct melody on one syllable (most notably “SHI-ning” of “Sure on this Shining Night” and “ad-mi-RA-bi-le” of “O magnum mysterium”), which creates a challenge of legato singing over a long phrase with wide leaps. However, Lauridsen knows the boundaries of the human voice well. It just takes a well-trained choir to sing these long lines with a supported, legato tone.

The DVD documentary Shining Night: A Portrait of Composer Morten Lauridsen provides insight into the composer’s process and his preferred habitat for composing, which is on Waldron Island, a small community in the San Juan Islands of the Pacific

Northwest. There, he is secluded from modern distractions and surrounded by nature, which is the source of much of the inspiration for his music.  

II. “O magnum mysterium”

a. Style

In his settings of Latin texts, Lauridsen often bases melodic material on chant, which has an unmetered and rhythmically flexible structure that works well in his style. In “O magnum mysterium,” the quarter note is the constant note value, whereas the eighth note has taken precedence in many other works. It is possible that this may be a nod to the longer note values of the Renaissance period and the Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548-1611) “O magnum mysterium.”

In Carol Krueger’s interview with Morten Lauridsen, which is documented in her dissertation on Lauridsen’s Chanson des Roses, he said that he dedicated “O magnum mysterium” to Paul Salamunovich because he feels the motet reflects Salamunovich’s expertise on chant and choral tone. Lauridsen states, “I’m writing to [Salamunovich’s] strength; that’s why all of this material is right out of chant, even though I never quote chant directly.” Lauridsen and chant go so well together because of the influence of text. Text is very important to Lauridsen. Although he is a composer by trade, he is very

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knowledgeable about poetry and literature. More about that later when discussing the
Nocturnes.

b. Success

In terms of copies sold, “O magnum mysterium” has been Lauridsen’s most successful octavo. In an email communication, the sales director for Peermusic Classical communicated that “O magnum mysterium” has sold over half a million copies to date\textsuperscript{109}. It was commissioned by Marshall Rutter, who was the President of the Los Angeles Master Chorale, in honor of his wife, Terry Knowles. The world premiere was done by the Los Angeles Master Chorale and conducted by Paul Salamunovich on December 18, 1994.

In the recording \textit{Dialogues: Musical Conversations between Composers and Conductors}, which is a conversation between Morten Lauridsen and Paul Salamunovich, facilitated by James Jordan, Lauridsen states that “O magnum mysterium” was the most difficult piece for him to compose and that he lost much sleep over it. He wanted to make a profound impact in the most understated way possible. So, he used simple harmonic structure with vocal lines conjunct in contour, which are inspired by Renaissance chant. He also employed the Renaissance technique of “fauxbourdon,” which is known to heighten the intelligibility of the text.\textsuperscript{110} Throughout the piece, root position chords only exist in passing. Lauridsen mentions that each phrase in “O magnum” is a unit, and there

\textsuperscript{109} Todd Vunderink, email to the author, November 1, 2017.
\textsuperscript{110} “Dialogues – Musical Conversations between Composers and Conductors,” interview by James Jordan, Morten Lauridsen, and Paul Salumnovich.
is an elasticity to them, similar to waves, which are inspired by his time spent at his composing haven on Waldron Island.

c. Text translation

O great mystery, and wondrous sacrament,
that animals should see the new-born Lord, lying in their manger!
Blessed is the Virgin whose womb was worthy to bear the Lord Jesus Christ.
Alleluia!

d. Performance

The choir will now perform “O magnum mysterium.”

III. “Dirait-on”

a. Style

“Dirait-on” was the first movement of Chansons des Roses cycle that Lauridsen wrote, although it falls last in the set. He initially wrote it as an encore piece in chanson populaire style for a particular concert and then crafted the remaining movements around “Dirait-on.” “Dirait-on” is the only accompanied piece in the cycle. The cycle is in arch form, which might be a nod to Bach’s Jesu meine Freude and Brahms’s Requiem, which are well-known extended works in arch form. Lauridsen has previously said that he has a particular affinity for the works of Brahms, who very successfully achieves the delicate balance between head and heart.111

b. Success due to accessibility

When explaining the ideal piece for the 2005 Brock Commission, for which *Nocturnes* was composed, the chair of the committee mentioned “Dirait-on” to Lauridsen as an example of the type of composition they wanted. They didn’t want something that would get performed once and sit on a shelf. They wanted something accessible and that anyone could perform, like “Dirait-on,” which led Lauridsen to consider “Sure on this Shining Night,” which he had already begun composing.

c. Rilke poetry, text/translation

In addition to his vast output of poetry in German, Rilke also wrote nearly 400 poems in French. The *Chansons des Roses* choral cycle is set to the French poetry of Rilke, as well as “Sa Nuit d’Été” and “Epilogue: Voici le Soir” of the *Nocturnes* (to be performed later). In *A Companion to the Works of Rainer Maria Rilke*, the authors write “Rilke’s poetry is so well-received in English-speaking countries… because it vividly exposes feelings and ideas that transcend the bounds of culture and language, revealing his congenial familiarity with universal human experiences.”

The translation for “Dirait-on” is as follows:

Abandon surrounding abandon,
Tenderness touching tenderness...
Your oneness endlessly caresses itself, so they say;

Self-caressing through its own clear reflection.
Thus you invent the theme of Narcissus fulfilled.

d. Performance

The choir will now perform “Dirait-on.”

IV. NOCTURNES

a. Brock commission, dates, premiere, etc.

The Nocturnes were written by Morten Lauridsen as the American Choral Directors Association’s 2005 Raymond W. Brock Memorial Commission for the national convention held in Los Angeles. At the time of the premiere at the ACDA convention, the choral cycle consisted of three pieces: “Sa Nuit d’Été,” “Soneto de la Noche,” and “Sure on this Shining Night.” The fourth movement of the cycle, “Epilogue Voici le Soir,” which rounds out the choral cycle, was written afterward, in 2008. The three-movement version of Nocturnes was premiered by the Donald Brinegar Singers out of Los Angeles with Donald Brinegar conducting and with Lauridsen himself at the piano. “Sure on this Shining Night” was the first piece composed, and the rest followed as Lauridsen decided to do a cycle of night poems in a variety of languages.
b. Poets and poetry (Rilke, Neruda, Agee)

In Milburn Price’s 2004 article regarding Nocturnes as the upcoming Brock commission, Lauridsen said: “My passion second to music is poetry. I read and study it constantly – every day. It is a fundamental part of my life. I have profound admiration for poets who seek deeper meanings and truths and are able to express themselves elegantly through the written word. Consequently, it has been a natural development for me as a composer to wed these two passions and to set texts to music.”

Three different languages and poets are utilized throughout the Nocturnes cycle: "Sa nuit d'Été" in French set to a poem by Rainer Maria Rilke, "Soneto de la Noche" in Spanish set to a sonnet by Pablo Neruda, "Sure on this Shining Night" in English set to a poem by James Agee, and "Epilogue: Voici le Soir" returning to French and the poetry of Rilke.

c. Style of each piece, harmonic language

In Nocturnes specifically, Lauridsen geared every aspect of each piece to the text – the content, the language, when it was written, the style. In our phone interview, Lauridsen said to me, “What I love about Rilke is that he forces you to use your imagination. So all these images that he conjures up are very mysterious.” “Sa Nuit d’Été” is in French, and Lauridsen said he was intending to paint a mysterious night in Paris in the 1920s, which was about the time the poem was written. Lauridsen includes

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more complex, jazz-tinged chords than is typical in the tonal palette of this later compositional period. “Sa Nuit d’Été” incorporates several melodic motives that coincide with a particular line of text. In mm. 40-47, Lauridsen puts them all together as a sort of exercise in invertible counterpoint, which creates such a thick texture of musical interest that builds to a thrilling musical climax.

First, the sopranos will sing motive 1.

(Choir, we are in “Sa Nuit d’Éte” mm. 5-9, soprano part alone.)

Next, the tenors will demonstrate motive 2.

(Choir, we are now at mm. 18-21 (letter A), tenor part alone.)

Now, the sopranos and altos will demonstrate motive 3.

(Choir, we are at page 5, mm. 37-39, sopranos and altos alone.)

And finally, all three motives and their harmonizations come together at letter B, m. 40 on page 6.

(Choir, we will begin at the pickup to letter B, found at the bottom of pg. 5, all voice parts and continue through m. 47.)

For the second movement of Nocturnes, Lauridsen sets Pablo Neruda’s “Soneto de la Noche” as a tender Chilean folksong to mirror Neruda’s roots in his home country of Chile. This beautiful love poem is set from the male perspective, a husband speaking to his wife about how when he dies he wants her to go on living and loving life as he waits for her asleep. Thus, Lauridsen uses the men’s voices to close out each section
expressively, as evidenced in mm. 16-19, 35-38, and 79-94, when the baritones and tenors trade off the melody.

In the climactic middle section of this piece (mm. 39-62), Lauridsen shows his preference for the subdominant as he alternates between first inversion I and IV triads with added seconds in the IV chords. By gravitating toward subdominant harmonies, he avoids the functional pull of the leading tone in the dominant harmonies and also creates an emphasis on text expression since the I chord (with added 4th) and IV chord (with added 2nd) create several shared pitches between the triads. Music historian Nick Strimple said “The constant realignment of a few vertical sonorities results in the undulating and glistening textures for which Lauridsen’s music is justly famous.”114 This section of music is a perfect example of that statement.

The text in this section is an expression of life, love, and passion. So much so that the text is repeated twice, the first time in F# major, and the second time a third higher, in the key of A major.

The text in this section translates to the following:

I want all that I love to keep on living,
And you whom I loved and sang above all things
To keep flowering into full bloom.

The choir will now sing the aforementioned section of “Soneto.” (Choir: pg. 5, letter B), all voice parts.

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114 Strimple, 247.
In my interview with Lauridsen, he cited the 2\textsuperscript{nd} bass’s F# as the foundation for everything from letter E page 9 to the end. He said it is “simply painting the idea of a person waiting and saying ‘I’m your foundation, and I’m waiting for you.’”

In movement 3, “Sure on this Shining Night,” which is the most often-performed movement of the cycle, due primarily to its accessibility for almost any advanced high school choir and being in English, Lauridsen is utilizing the style of the long lyric songs of the Broadway stage, channeling musical theatre classics such as \textit{South Pacific}, \textit{Showboat}, and \textit{Oklahoma}. The long-lyric disjunct melody creates a haunting phrase that hangs in the air, above everything else, like a star. Lauridsen uses the word “shining” as a trigger word and treats it melismatically.

In our interview, Lauridsen spoke fondly of staying at Oscar Hammerstein’s farm, which has now been converted into a bed and breakfast, every time he visits Pennsylvania. It is clear that he has a great fondness for composers of American musical theatre, and their long-lyric ballads inspired “Sure on this Shining Night.”

(Choir, let’s begin at page 7, letter E, all voice parts.)

In movement 4, “Epilogue: Voici le Soir,” Lauridsen hearkens back to material from the first movement, “Sa Nuit d’Ete,” which is mostly heard in the key of C# sharp major for the vocal parts and c# minor in the piano part.

d. Before we perform all four \textit{Nocturnes}, select choir members will speak the text and or translation in order.

“We will now present \textit{Nocturnes} in its entirety”
Maggie Blair Owens was born in Bowling Green, Kentucky, and grew up attending Bowling Green Independent Schools. In 2005, she graduated from the University of Kentucky with a Bachelor’s of Music degree in Vocal Music Education. She served as choir director at Bowling Green High School, her alma mater, from 2008-2012. During that time, she attained two Masters degrees (a Master’s of Arts in Educational Leadership from Western Kentucky University, conferred in 2009, and a Master’s of Music in Choral Conducting from Michigan State University, conferred in 2012). In the fall of 2012, she entered the doctoral program in choral conducting at the University of Kentucky. She served as a teaching assistant for the University of Kentucky Women’s Choir and University of Kentucky Choristers. After DMA coursework, Maggie served as Director of Choral Activities at Wayne State College in Wayne, Nebraska. Afterwards, she moved back to Kentucky to serve on choral and vocal faculty at Bellarmine University and is now choral director at Oldham County High School in LaGrange, Kentucky. She is also the choir director at St. John Lutheran Church in Louisville, Kentucky.

Maggie Owens has served as a choral clinician and adjudicator throughout Kentucky and Nebraska. She has also served as State Choral Division Chair for the Kentucky Music Educators Association (2013-15) and is currently the Repertoire-Specific Coordinator for Kentucky ACDA.