

Spring 4-17-2020

**A CONDUCTORS GUIDE: JOHANNES BRAHMS'S "ABENDLIED,"
JEFFREY AMES'S IN REMEMBRANCE, CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI'S
MISSA DA CAPELLA A QUATTRO VOCI (SV 257), GEORGE
FRIDERIC HANDEL'S "THEIR BODIES ARE BURRIED IN PEACE,"
JAKE RUNESTAD'S LET MY LOVE BE HEARD, NED ROREM'S SING
MY SOULD HIS WONDROUS LOVE, AND AARON COPLAND'S
CHING-A-RING CHAW**

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by

Thomas Frost

B.S., Tennessee State University, 2017

A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Music

Department of Music
in the Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
May 2020

RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

A CONDUCTORS GUIDE: JOHANNES BRAHMS'S "ABENDLIED," JEFFREY AMES'S *IN REMEMBRANCE*, CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI'S *MISSA DA CAPELLA A QUATTRO VOCI* (SV 257), GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL'S "THEIR BODIES ARE BURRIED IN PEACE," JAKE RUNESTAD'S *LET MY LOVE BE HEARD*, NED ROEM'S *SING MY SOULD HIS WONDROUS LOVE*, AND AARON COPLAND'S *CHING-A-RING CHAW*

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Thomas Frost

A Research Paper Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Music

in the field of Music

Approved by:

Dr. Susan Davenport, Chair

Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
April 17, 2020

AN ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH PAPER OF

Thomas Frost, for the Master of Music degree in Music, presented on April 17, 2020, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: A CONDUCTORS GUIDE: JOHANNES BRAHMS'S "ABENDLIED," JEFFREY AMES'S *IN REMEMBRANCE*, CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI'S *MISSA DA CAPELLA A QUATTRO VOCI (SV 257)*, GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL'S "THEIR BODIES ARE BURIED IN PEACE," JAKE RUNESTAD'S *LET MY LOVE BE HEARD*, NED ROREM'S *SING MY SOUL HIS WONDROUS LOVE*, AND AARON COPLAND'S *CHING-A-RING CHAW*

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Susan Davenport

The following research paper presents the research and rehearsal process of the works included in a choral conducting recital on March 5, 2020. For my recital, I chose to program: Johannes Brahms's "Abendlied," Jeffery Ames's *In Remembrance*, Claudio Monteverdi's *Missa da Capella a Quattro Voci (SV 257)*, George Frideric Handel's "Their Bodies are Buried in Peace," Jake Runestad's *Let My Love Be Heard*, Ned Rorem's *Sing My Soul His Wondrous Love*, and Aaron Copland's *Ching-A-Ring Chaw*. The theme of the recital featured musical compositions with texts representative of the process of grief. I will discuss the following for each piece: biographical and historical context of the composer and piece, formal analysis, rehearsal and conducting considerations, and review of recordings.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Susan Davenport for her investment throughout this degree program. Her mentorship, patience, encouragement, and guidance have transformed me as a student over the course of this degree. I would like to thank Dr. Christopher Morehouse for generously taking me into his conducting studio in my final semester. I am grateful for the time he has given me in and out of the classroom while Dr. Davenport was on sabbatical leave. I would also like to show my appreciation to Dr. David Dillard for developing me as a vocalist and performer over the course of this degree program. I would like to recognize my peers in the School of Music, especially my colleagues Elaina Crenshaw and Douglass Scott Johnson, for their support, encouragement and trust in my leadership. Finally, I would like to thank my dear friends, Rachel Alessio, Lucas Morgan, and Melanie Schuette for their optimism and consolation throughout this entire process.

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CHAPTER ONE
JOHANNES BRAHMS'S
“ABENDLIED” (1877)

Biographical and Historical Context

Johannes Brahms's compositional output grants him indisputable acclaim as one of the most prolific German composers of the nineteenth century. His compositional output included symphonies, concerti, chamber works, piano works, two hundred lieder and more than seventy choral works. His writing for voice was greatly influenced by the tutelage of Robert and Clara Schumann. In his twenties and thirties, the Hamburg native held several choral positions: in 1857, he was appointed conductor of the court in Detmold; in 1859, he founded a women's chorus in Hamburg; and in 1863, he became the conductor of the Vienna Singakademie.¹ He held his fourth choral position between 1872 and 1875 as the conductor of the Vienna Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde where most of his time was spent conducting works of Bach and Handel.² At Detmold, he began composing his *Requiem*, as well as part songs with piano accompaniment. Dr. Chester Alwes, Professor Emeritus of Choral Music and Music Education at the University of Illinois, states, “Qualitatively and quantitatively, the part songs of Johannes Brahms are the consummate achievement of the romantic part song.”³

Part song is a romantic form of vocal music written for three or more voice parts and is most commonly set homophonically. These works are considered gems in the choral repertoire

¹ Dennis Shrock. *Choral Repertoire*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009., 474

² Ibid., 475.

³ Chester Alwes, *A History of Western Choral Music, Volume II*. Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 2016., 48

for their accessibility. The tradition of part song began with composers such as Schumann, Schubert, Berlioz, and Rossini and flourished by the efforts of composers like Mendelssohn, Rheinberger, and Bruckner. Part song is originally scored for one voice on a part and was not composed with a choral sonority in mind. Though a quartet would eliminate ensemble issues, these pieces are performed by contemporary choral ensembles as the phrase lengths are often too demanding for the solo voice. Brahms's *Vier Quartetten*, Op 92., No. 3 "Abendlied" is a part song that lends itself best to an ensemble.

Formal Analysis

"Abendlied," written in 1877 during the period in which he was focusing primarily on composing symphonies, exemplifies classical romanticism in its structure and form. The piece is in a compound ternary form with a coda. It is in F major, common time, and marked *andante*. The first A section, mm. 3-13, and consists of two phrases of equal length with a three bar extension. An "oom-pah" quarter note, eighth-note motive is scored in the accompaniment throughout, harmonically supporting the vocal lines as well as keeping the buoyancy of the *andante* tempo.

The B section begins at m. 15 with a brief tonicization of D minor. The basses enter with the same rhythmic motive as heard before in the A section. The voices sing acapella and are then imitated by the alto and tenor voices in m. 16. The piano accompaniment returns in m. 17 all in bass clef, restating the theme sung by the basses. In m. 21, the opening theme occurs again a capella, continuing the harmonic instability set up in m. 15. This pattern continues through the phrase ending at m. 27.

The final A section begins in m. 29 and is constructed similarly to the beginning with new text. There are two phrases, one four measures and one six measures featuring a melodic

extension in m. 36. The final phrase at m. 39 leads into the coda in m. 43. Measure. 43 to the end, Brahms used a sigh motive (descending whole step motion) to illustrate one drifting to sleep. The accompaniment through this passage is composed of half-notes on beats two and four. This section is marked *dim sempre* beginning a continuous *diminuendo*. This is reinforced with the *più sempre* (more, always) marking that follows in m. 50. The voices sing their last note in m. 56 and the piano finishes on an F major chord.

Rehearsal and Conducting Considerations

“Abendlied” ended up being the perfect opening piece for this program. I found that opening with a German piece immediately caused the signers to engage on a deeper level mentally, setting up an outstanding program. Though the end result was a successful rendering of the piece, teaching the German language certainly came with its own set of challenges. This author relied heavily on the book by Joan Wall, *Diction for Singers*, to aid in teaching the German pronunciation.

Although English and German share many of the same rules, the most significant discrepancies came with the German schwa and placement of consonants. Wall argues that the German schwa [ə] should be closer to the American “uh.” With enough repetition, the choir was broken of their habit to sing an open [ε] for every final schwa “e.” The consonant however, presented different obstacles.

The ensemble had considerable difficulty singing certain German diagraphs such as “ch” and placement of initial consonants. The ich-laut and ach-laut are sounds with which native English speakers typically struggle. When singing, these consonants can be completely missed or inaudible. In words like “mich,” a fraction of the ensemble was encouraged to add a slight [ʃ] to ensure the consonant would carry. The ensemble needed constant reminders to get past initial

consonants landing the vowel on the beat. Words beginning with [f] were most commonly problematic. This issue caused the tempo to drag toward the middle of the piece and resulted in a loss of forward motion during the rehearsal process.

The “oom-pah” accompaniment in the piano was helpful for solidifying tempo by providing the constant eighth-note subdivision for the choir. There was some intentional push and pull in tempo as *rubato* is a convention of the romantic era, but the problem spots for the ensemble were the places where the piano would drop out completely as in m. 15. The ensemble struggled with keeping the pulse through these passages. I counteracted this tendency by making the ensemble aware of the problem and encouraging them to anticipate each beat. As the singers engaged mentally in the forward motion, they were able to maintain the previous tempo.

Review of Recordings

Brahms’s “Abendlied” is performed differently in every recording found. The majority of differences were choices about tempo, dynamics, and tone. The only indication of tempo for “Abendlied” is the *andante* marking at the beginning, with no clearer indication of how many beats per minute. Brahms was however, more precise about dynamics throughout the piece and one would assume the piece should be sung with a warmth and roundness of tone.

The Milwaukee Chamber Choir begins at 88 beats per minute and slows drastically when the piano drops out at m. 15. The same change in tempo occurs at m. 50 creating a sense that true time has been lost. The dynamics were almost completely ignored in this recording. The ensemble lacked the growth in phrases and the dynamic contrast between *piano* and *forte* was minimal. The tone of the ensemble was strident, piercing, and not well blended. Such lack of attention to detail has unfortunately made for a poor performance of a masterfully crafted work.

The Monteverdi Choir under the direction of John Eliot Gardiner is a preferable

interpretation. He begins at 104 beats per minute but makes much use of *ritardando* and rubato throughout the piece. There is almost never a consistent tempo for an entire four bar phrase, but this does not detract from the forward motion of the piece. Gardiner's recording has a much wider range of dynamics that keep interest in the intricacies of the piece. The choir sings with a healthy, rich, warm, and vibrant tone, ideal for Romantic performance practice. The Robert Shaw Festival Singers performed a similar interpretation but was generally faster. Shaw started out at close to 120 beats per minute. The tone of the ensemble was just as beautiful as that of Gardiner's perhaps with even more color and vibrancy. Though there are many model recordings of this work, the most representative are those by the Monteverdi Choir and the Robert Shaw Festival Chorus.

CHAPTER TWO
JEFFERY AMES'S
IN REMEMBRANCE (2005)

Biographical and Historical Context

Dr. Jeffery L. Ames (b. 1969) is currently the Director of Choral Activities at Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee. Ames holds a BM in Vocal Performance and Piano Accompanying from James Madison University, a MM in Choral Music Education and PhD in Choral Conducting and Choral Music Education from Florida State University. Ames's reputation is growing steadily as a distinguished contemporary composer and arranger. His works have been premiered by the Florida Music Educators Association (1996), the Florida American Choral Directors Association (1998), the Southern Division of ACDA (2002), the National ACDA Conference in Los Angeles (2005), and more. Ames focuses on multiculturalism and diversity in his compositions. In an interview with the World Strides website at Carnegie Hall, Ames mentioned that one of his favorite composers is Karl Jenkins. Ames states, "He is a creative genius, in my opinion, who melds the Western Art tradition with multiculturalism. His music touches my soul in a special way."⁴ Jenkins's influence is apparent in Ames's compositional output, especially in pieces as heartfelt as *For the Sake of Our Children* and *In Remembrance*. The piece itself was a means of catharsis

The piece itself was a means of catharsis as Ames came to terms with their deaths. While Ames is not a formally trained composer, *In Remembrance* demonstrates his understanding of

⁴ Sarah Wyland, "5 Questions with Festival at Carnegie Hall Choral Conductor Jeffrey Ames," *World Strides*, May 5, 2015. <https://worldstrides.com/blog/2015/05/5-questions-with-festival-at-carnegie-hall-choral-conductor-jeffrey-ames/>

elevated choral repertoire by his application of form and development of motivic material. Ames articulated that his greatest influences for the piece were Fauré's *Requiem* and Rutter's *Requiem*, specifically, Rutter's "Lux Aeterna."⁵ The musical influences are easily seen in the analysis of *In Remembrance*.

Formal Analysis

In Remembrance is scored for SATB chorus, piano, and French horn. It is in the key of F major, 3/4 time, sixty-two beats per minute, and is in a ternary form (ABA'). The first A section, mm. 1-23, begins with the tenors and basses singing "Lux Aeterna" sustained and legato over a moving eighth-note accompaniment in the piano. The tranquil effect of the opening passage is reminiscent of that of Rutter's "Lux Aeterna." The soprano and alto voices join with the eighth-note pick-up motive that would give direction to the entire piece at m. 7. Rutter's influence is realized again in m. 16 with the descending suspended vocal lines bringing the A section to a close (see figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1. Descending suspended motion in mm. 14-18 of *In Remembrance*

The image displays a musical score for the piece *In Remembrance*, specifically focusing on measures 14 through 18. The score is written for a SATB chorus and a French horn. The lyrics are "Do-mi - ne:". The music is in F major and 3/4 time. The tempo is marked *mp* (mezzo-piano). The score shows a descending eighth-note accompaniment in the piano and vocal lines that are sustained and legato. The French horn part is also shown, with a descending line in measure 16.

⁵ Jeffery Ames, interview by author via email, September 16, 2019.

Figure 2. Influence for descending suspended motion in mm.78-85 of *Requiem*, “Lux Aeterna”

The B section, starting at m. 23, is established by a change in mood and text. Following the French horn interlude in mm. 15-22, a more somber *mezzo piano* dynamic is required of the ensemble. The *poco piu mosso* is accomplished in part by the agitation of the accompaniment, along with the intensity of the text. “Turn to me and be gracious, for my heart is in distress” is first iterated by the soprano and alto voices. The forward motion continues when the tenor and bass voices enter with the same text in m. 31, setting us up for a point of climax in the next phrase. The high point of the piece is reached at m. 41 with the text, “Oh God, my God. Why hast thou forsaken me?” At this point, the French horn echoes the melody of the upper voices at m. 23, adding a piercing edginess to the texture.⁶ Ames ends the B section with a *quasi cadenza* in the French horn. Ames notes, “I have also been told that the cadenza serves as a representation of Gabriel blowing the trumpet and calling those who die in the Lord to be resurrected.”⁷ The A'

⁶ Jeffery Ames, interview by author via email, September 16, 2019.

⁷ Ibid.

section in m. 62 is the same as the beginning with the exception of the extension beginning in m. 76 on the text, “Lord in your infinite mercy, grant them rest forever more.” In m. 80, the piano plays the opening sequence and the horn recasts the “Lux aeterna” motive over the final F₉ chord.

Rehearsal and Conducting Considerations

In Remembrance very well may have been the crowd favorite on the concert. The choir found it easy to invest in the immediacy of Ames’s cathartic expression. However, the ensemble struggled with dynamic contrast and maintaining a restrained tempo throughout the piece. The most profound thing about this work is its simplicity. Because so much of the piece speaks on its own, it can be easy to overlook subtleties that work to convey the message on a deeper level.

Dynamics were perhaps the most important driving force in terms of executing the piece. Ames was very specific about the dynamics he wanted. Where there was growth intended, it was supported by a thickening in the texture or a rise in the contour of the melodic line. Ames made it clear in our interview that he preferred a more dramatic dynamic shift to further intensify his writing. An exercise that was helpful in unifying this dynamic contrast was taking away the text and asking the choir to sing on a tall [a] to allow the line to move freely in their voices. This also allowed the singers to approach the piece with a richer and more vibrant tone.

Early in the rehearsal process, the ensemble had a tendency to rush tempo. A conductor must be aware that the moving eighth-notes in the opening motive of the accompaniment are not to rush time, but to take time. In an effort to achieve forward motion, many directors will slightly push tempos, however with *In Remembrance*, anything above 62 beats per minute is too fast. Details such as final consonants could be lost if the tempo is too brisk. The piece should move at a slow enough pace that an intermediate ensemble could sing many of the ending consonants on the upbeat. The most obvious moment would be in m. 52. The final [t] should land on the second

half of beat two.

Review of Recordings

Though the piece is popular among advanced high school and collegiate ensembles, the newness of the piece has somewhat limited the amount of quality recordings available. The best recordings of *In Remembrance* are those that make the most of Ames's interpretive markings. Audiences relish in the beauty and simplicity of the piece, but a performance that lacks dynamic contrast and varying tone loses its poignancy. Ames had a very specific emotional message to convey in the piece and that can be lost completely without paying attention to detail.

Perhaps the most successful recording is that of the Collegiate Mixed Honor Choir at the ACDA National Convention 2017. This particular interpretation is truest to Ames's sound ideal as he conducted the ensemble himself. He made subtle changes to the editorial marks made by Walton Music, for instance, adding a crescendo between mm. 4-5 and connecting the phrase each time the expositional motive occurs.

The OMEA District 2 2012 Honors Choir's recording provides a good idea of the sonorities of a high school ensemble, however the conductor superimposed a tempo change at m. 40, losing the sense of forward motion as a result. Though there are many live recordings available, that of the Collegiate Mixed Honor Choir at the ACDA National Convention 2017 is the most representative interpretation. With Ames conducting the piece, including several changes to the editorial markings, the finished product was the closest to his desires as possible.

CHAPTER THREE

CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI'S

MISSA DA CAPELLA A QUATTRO VOCI (SV 257) (1640)

Biographical and Historical Context

Claudio Monteverdi is best known for his contribution to Italian Baroque literature. The madrigals and operas published near the end of his life exemplify the buoyancy and vitality that would characterize Baroque music. While the same is said for most of his sacred music, a quantity of his works for the church maintained a degree of conservativeness similar to his contemporaries. Though not a devout catholic, his employment was primarily as *maestro di capella*, in Mantua (1595–1613) and at St. Mark's Cathedral in Venice (1613–1643) where he composed a considerable body of sacred choral music.⁸ He composed approximately fifty sacred choral works, most of which are contained in three publications—*Sacrae cantiunculae* (1582), *Sanctissimae virgini missa senis vocibus ad ecclesiarum choros ac Vespere pluribus decantandae* (1610), and *Selva morale e spiritual* (1640).⁹

Most of the works in Monteverdi's *Selva morale* are Baroque in nature as he added instrumentation and moved away from the polychoral style that exemplified his works of the late Venetian Renaissance. While he added instrumentation to many of his works in the *Selva morale*, his mass is quite restrained. The four voice mass in the *Selva morale*, *Messa da Capella a quattro voci* (SV 257), was composed during his Venetian period in the new *stile antico*. At this time the term, *stile antico* became synonymous with 'old fashioned dignity' and was a

⁸ Chester Alwes, *A History of Western Choral Music, Volume I*. Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 2016., 170

⁹ Dennis Shrock. *Choral Repertoire*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009., 192

Figure 4. Points of imitation in close canon mm. 1-6 of *Veni sponsa Christi*

The image shows a musical score for four voices: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The Soprano and Alto parts are in treble clef, and the Tenor and Bass parts are in bass clef. The Soprano part begins with a half note 'Ky' on G4, followed by a half note 'ri' on A4, a half note 'e' on B4, and a half note 'e' on B4. The Alto part begins with a half note 'Ky' on G3, followed by a half note 'ri' on A3, a half note 'e' on B3, and a half note 'e' on B3. The Tenor and Bass parts are silent for the first four measures. The Tenor part begins in measure 5 with a half note 'Ky' on G2. The Bass part is silent for the first four measures and begins in measure 5 with a half note 'Ky' on G1. The lyrics are 'Ky - ri - e e - lei - - - - -'.

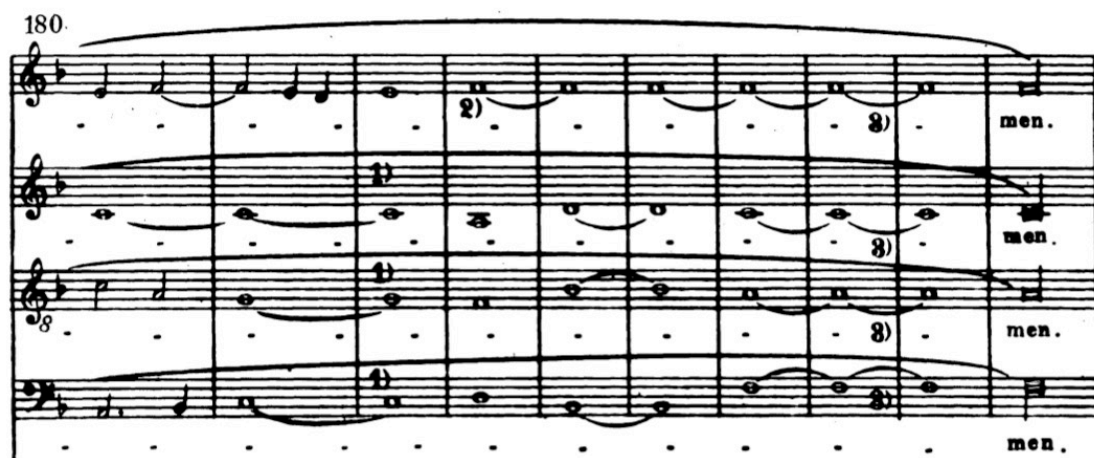
The section ends on an F major chord with the third found only in the basso continuo. The “Christe eleison” begins opposite the opening statement with the soprano and alto stating the point of imitation in canon followed by the tenor and basses measures later. Monteverdi only uses close points of imitation for points of climax toward the end of the B section. The return of the “Kyrie” mirrors the opening but with canzona-like points of imitation on repeated notes.¹² The final A section ends the same as the first, with a sustained F major chord.

The “Gloria” is a significantly longer movement. It can be broken down into five smaller sections dictated by the text however, the movement does not lend itself to any traditional form. The introduction is set to “Et in terra pax ... Glorificamus te” beginning with the alto and bass on a unison F-natural. The sopranos enter in close canon in m. 2 and the tenors in m. 11. The next section is marked also by a change in meter. At m. 25 the change of text and time to three beats per measure indicate a change of intent. The homophonic text setting calls for a rise in dynamic volume as well. As common to Renaissance performance practice, the three beats per measure from m. 25-30 must fit the same amount of time prescribed to the two beats of the previous and

¹² Denis Arnold, and Nigel Fortune. *The Monteverdi Companion*. London: Faber and Faber, 1968., 171

following sections. The next section begins at m. 67 with the basses, “Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.” At m. 118 the new text is set homophonically bringing about an increased dynamic. The percussive quality of the consonants in m. 122 with “Tu solus sanctus” added to the intensity of the new section. Finally, the last section begins in m. 142 with, “Cum sancto spiritu.” Monteverdi’s mastery of composition is demonstrated in the most progressive “amen” in the entire mass. His use of a deceptive cadence in m. 183 is a point of interest as it was uncommon in his works composed at the time (see figure 5).

Figure 5. Deceptive cadence in m. 183 of *Messa da Capella a quattro voci*, “Gloria”



The “Agnus dei” is the shortest movement of the mass. It too can be broken down into three sections established by the text. The movement as a whole is written in a similar fashion as the “Kyrie.” The beginning of the movement opens much like the “Kyrie” with the tenors and basses singing in close canon and the alto and soprano reiterating that canon eight bars later. Throughout the entire movement the treble and bass parts move together with one or two bars between entrances. The treble and bass continue to alternate phrases until m. 45. The final section on the text “miserere nobis” brings all four parts in together thickening the texture to its highest point at m. 52. All four voices sing to the cadence on an open fifth.

Rehearsal and Conducting Considerations

Missa da Capella a quattro voci (SV 257), though simple, was effective in terms of ensuring the students of the Southern Illinois University Concert Choir had a well-rounded academic year. The anticipated challenges were intonation and vowel shape over prolonged melismatic passages, demonstrating appropriate Renaissance performance practice and achieving contrast in each changing section. Though the ensemble handled several unexpected challenges masterfully, these things required more attention.

In the “Kyrie,” the ensemble has to sing on an open [ε] for the majority of the movement. The vowel was easily altered as the contour of the line changed. The singers were told early on in the learning process to place a [d] in front of all the moving notes. This reinforced the purity of the vowel and throughout the line. The “Kyrie” was the easiest movement to achieve phrasal growth as they were much shorter than in other movements of the mass. The singers could more clearly see the beginning, high point, and end of each line. After being instructed to begin at a confident *piano*, crescendo to a *mezzo forte* at the peak of the line and diminuendo back to a *piano* by the cadence, they were able to apply that concept to the rest of the movement.

The “Gloria” was the most difficult to teach as it is the longest movement with the most difference between sections. The singers phrased the first section the same as they did the first movement. After adding a slight pause after the half cadence at m. 24, they were then instructed to sing with a more sudden dynamic change to a *mezzo forte* at m. 25 where the piece goes to three. They were asked to do the same thing at m. 117. Adding a clean cut-off before m. 118 allowed them to enter together confidently. The choir then accented the consonants throughout the section to bring out the percussive quality of the language.

The “Agnus Dei” was by far the easiest movement of the mass. Because of this, it was given less rehearsal time which lead to more last-minute concerns about its performance. The

students applied all the same concepts that were taught in the previous two movements. The [ε] vowel was much cleaner upon first read thanks to their efforts in the “Kyrie.” The *crescendo* and *diminuendo* through phrases also came together naturally. Tempo was the only issue for this movement as it moved slightly faster than the “Kyrie” and “Gloria.” To solve this problem, the students needed much more repetition of this movement.

Review of Recordings

The challenge of this mass lies in interpreting enough subtle variety to keep it interesting for the listeners and the ensemble while staying true to the style of the period. Akadêmia, conducted by Françoise Lasserre does not add much variety in sound. To observe appropriate Renaissance performance practice, an ensemble should allow the text to dictate change in mood and tempo. This recording did not effectively bring those characteristics to the forefront. The ensemble performs with a beautiful tone as they specialize in early music, but the performance itself is monotonous. Akadêmia performs this piece in the key of D-flat with only male voices, further limiting the diversity of the recording.

The Choir of St. John’s College, Cambridge performs the “Kyrie” at a much slower tempo than most ensembles. It is much easier to hear the voice leading, however the added weight detracts from the beauty of the writing. Instead of having female alto and sopranos, the Choir of St. John’s College features young boys on the treble parts providing a sonority uncommon in most American ensembles today. The “Gloria” moves at a much faster tempo and is quite refreshing. George Guest, the conductor, allowed the text to dictate each new section keeping the mass interesting all the way through.

Ensemble Elyma delivered the most consistent recording of this work. Keeping the same tempo throughout the entirety of the work did not take away from the nuance of each movement.

Director Gabriel Garrido was especially sensitive to the changing text and the percussive potential of the consonants in the “Gloria” at m. 25 and m. 122. Garrido chose to repeat the “Agnus Dei” to iterate both text options at the end, “miserere nobis” and “dona nobis pacem.” There are several recordings of this work of varying quality, but those of The Choir of St. John’s College and Ensemble Elyma are certainly the most standard performances.

CHAPTER FOUR

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL'S

“THEIR BODIES ARE BURIED IN PEACE” (1737)

Biographical and Historical Context

Born in Halle, Germany, just north of Leipzig, George Frideric Handel began studying music in secret just before turning ten years old. His father objected to his pursuit of music as he did not see it as a realistic source of income, but his mother granted him access to musical resources. At twenty-one years old, Handel went to Italy where he began composing cantatas, motets, operas and oratorios. His Italian operas had the largest following of his compositional output until the English taste turned away from it in the 1730s. “This sudden loss of subscribers combined with the regulations of the lent season became a financial burden, thus the stage was set for the alchemy we call the Handelian oratorio.”¹³

Many of Handel's oratorios were composed after 1730, late in his career.¹⁴ The Handelian oratorio is his own creation and a hybrid of essential features from a variety of sources including: the choral style of his palms, English masque, English choral music, oratorio, and Italian opera seria.¹⁵ *Alexander's Feast* was a precursor to what would be Handel's first truly successful English oratorio. After the fall of his opera season in 1738, he felt charged to compose two more to sustain the following musical season. While composing *Saul and Israel in Egypt* that same year, Handel realized that he needed his librettists to include certain topics that he

¹³ Chester Alwes, *A History of Western Choral Music, Volume I*. Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 2016., 270

¹⁴ Dennis Shrock. *Choral Repertoire*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009., 327

¹⁵ Howard E Smither. *A History of the Oratorio*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977.,178

naturally composed better for, such as coronation anthems, hallelujah choruses, and mournful laments.¹⁶

Israel in Egypt is unique in that it does not feature characters or have a libretto made up of poetic adaptations of the bible as most oratorio do. Instead, it is scripture set musically. The oratorio in its most original form featured twenty-eight choruses and only five arias, and three duets. Audiences did not respond favorably at the time so Handel advertised a second performance with revisions.¹⁷ The story of the oratorio remained centered around the death of King Joseph and the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian rule featuring such mournful pieces as his Funeral Anthem for Queen Caroline, “Their Bodies are Buried in Peace.”

Formal Analysis

“Their Bodies are Buried in Peace” is in a simple binary form. The first A section, mm. 1-22, opens in F minor with a *grave* tempo indication, and in common time communicating a great deal of information before the first note is heard. In the Baroque, *grave* suggested an emotional approach rather than a specific tempo. In the context of the period, it still meant very slow and solemn, but it is clear that Handel expected the interpreter to bring a sense of mourning to the tempo as well. The minor tonality adds a sense of dejection and gravitas, along with the text, “their bodies are buried in peace,” further informing the decision of tempo. Handel uses traditional Baroque voice leading as he reaches a half cadence in m. 22, with interjections of the strings repeated motive.

The B section presents an entirely new affect to the audience as Handel set it in F major.

¹⁶ Chester Alwes, *A History of Western Choral Music, Volume I*. Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 2016., 272

¹⁷ Dennis Shrock. *Choral Repertoire*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009., 328

The stings are in unison with the voices as they sing, “but their name liveth ever more,” with a more buoyant attitude and a stress on the upbeats in mm. 24-34. The new tempo marking is *andante moderato*, in the Baroque meaning a moderate walking tempo, but to Handel, suggests a celebratory mood. Handel’s use of dotted rhythms and displaced accents along with the cut time metric system give this section an added liveliness. In m. 34, Handel intelligently used text painting to add life to the imitative, polyphonic passage that follows. In m. 40, the voices realign for accent and split again in m. 44 into soprano, alto and tenor, bass groups until m. 48 beat three. The voices move in homophony until the end of the B section in m. 58.

The return of the A section is only slightly altered from the initial iteration. The section begins in D-flat major suggesting a sense of ease or comfort in the exultance of the previous segment. The half cadence in m. 65 on an E-flat major seven quickly resolves to A-flat in m. 70. The chorus begins again in F major in the following measure and ends on another half cadence in m. 78 setting up the return of the B section seamlessly. The final B section features an extension in the opening in mm. 80-82 rather than the end as one would expect from a baroque composition. From that point to the end, this section is identical to the first B section.

Rehearsal and Conducting Considerations

“Their Bodies are Buried in Peace” was the perfect baroque chorus to diversify the program while fitting so well thematically. This piece was the perfect teaching tool for Baroque performance practice and provided many challenges along the way. Achieving an accurate interpretation true to the sound ideals of the Baroque period required significant teaching of Baroque rhythm, purity of tone, and restraint.

The talented singers of the Southern Illinois University Concert Choir had no trouble reading the rhythms of the B section. They were encouraged to do so during the first rehearsal to

ensure they were singing the right pitches at the right time. Immediately in the second rehearsal, the dotted rhythms were addressed. The singers were instructed to hold the dotted pitches longer than they typically would in any piece beyond the Classical period and subsequently shortening even more so the notes that follow. The choir was then coached to treat all sixteenth notes as pickups, understanding that baroque phrase structure hardly ever begins on beat one. At first, the ensemble had difficulty lining up together rhythmically. They were then instructed to sing on a staccato “doot.” This allowed them to feel the pulse together, unifying their delayed pickups as well as freed their voices.

Handel’s genius composition remains relevant in part for its approachability to developing voices. The students quickly responded to how well the vocal lines complimented their voices and were eager to sing as loudly and beautifully as possible. The staccato “doot” assisted the ensemble in realizing a purer tone characteristic of the Baroque in the B section. That single exercise alleviated the weight that was carried to the top of the soprano and tenor voices and counteracted that same idea at the bottom of the alto and bass ranges creating a more homogenous tone throughout the ensemble.

Baroque music should be treated with restraint when tempo and dynamics are altered per the composer’s interpretive indications. It was clear the first time reading through the end of the B sections that the singers had a more romanticized idea of how the *allargando* should be treated. The choir was directed to ignore the marking until the notes and rhythms were accurate. They were surprised at the minimal *ritardando* and *crescendo* desired in that section. Fortuitously, the choir was profoundly responsive to the direction given.

Review of Recordings

This particular chorus is accessible but with some deceptive intricacies that have made

themselves apparent in some of the recordings this author found. The form of the chorus is straight forward and easy to perform well. Most conductors agree on tempo and the Baroque dynamics Handel had written, but nuance is what elevates the performance. Agreement of consonants, shaping of phrases in the A sections, and buoyance and vitality in the B section are some of the things that differ between recordings.

An exceptional recording of this work would be that of John Eliot Gardiner and the Monteverdi Choir. During the A sections, there is a gradual rise and fall from the beginning to end of phrases. Gardiner takes the rest as a moment of breath after the word “peace” each time the chorus sings it. The tone of the ensemble captures the dark mood of the section without compromising the forward motion and phrasing. The B sections sound brighter and more dance-like even though Gardiner chose a slower tempo than most. The *allargando* at the end is not too stretched nor too loud. This was a remarkably accurate interpretation.

The Bavarian Radio Chorus under the direction of Peter Dijkstra was another fantastic recording in its own way. The strings did not sustain any parts during the A section. The thinner texture eliminated some of the weight of other recordings, however it also lost the sense of somberness. The choir did not agree on the placement of the [s] in m. 5. Dijkstra chose to connect in places like m. 19 and m. 75. This didn’t allow the ear to truly digest those cadential points and extensions.

The most stylistically accurate recording I found was that of the Rasatt Vocal Ensemble, led by Holger Speck. His tempos are slightly faster than those of the previous recordings. The increased tempo added energy to the sound of the ensemble and was much more Baroque in style. Speck had the most apparent growth in phrases throughout the A sections. The ensemble had a pureness of tone that the other two did not as well. In the B sections, Speck acknowledged

the baroque style of double dotting and delayed sixteenth notes leading to a downbeat. This kept the life and vitality in the section. The *allargando* at the end was well executed and with no sustain on the last note. With many recordings readily available, those by the Monteverdi Choir and Rassat Vocal Ensemble are exemplary.

CHAPTER FIVE

JAKE RUNESTAD'S

LET MY LOVE BE HEARD (2014)

Biographical and Historical Context

Jake Runestad is currently one of the most frequently performed American contemporary composers. The Rockford, Illinois native received his BS in Music Education from Winona State University in 2009 and his MM in Composition from Peabody Conservatory in 2011. During his graduate studies, he studied with Kevin Puts and Libby Larson who helped him realize that he could become a composer. He says, "Libby was the one who really encouraged me to become a composer because I didn't really know that was a thing you could do."¹⁸ Of his compositional process, Runestad says, "Libby Larson really taught me to focus on the 'why' of music. I always start with the text first. It dictates the form, melodic material, and the sound world we live in for a piece."¹⁹ Runestad has composed for a variety of genres and ensembles including orchestra and wind ensemble but has been most recognized for his works for opera and chorus. His composition in the choral idiom is strongly influenced by Ralph Vaughan Williams, Dominic Argento, and Samuel Barber. He comments, "If talking about vocal music, I think they set text well and write beautifully for voices and instruments. They are fantastic at setting motivic material, which is what I'm really interested in as a composer."²⁰

Let My Love Be Heard is one of Runestad's most performed works for chorus. The piece

¹⁸ Jake Runestad, interview by author, January 8, 2020.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

was commissioned by Tiia-Mai Redditt for Choral Arts Northwest and the UMKC Conservatory Singers. The world premiere was conducted by Robert Bode in Seattle, Washington on December 13, 2014. *Let My Love Be Heard* was later performed by the Bob Cole Conservatory Chamber Choir under the direction of Jonathan Talberg in memory of Nohemi Gonzales, a student that was killed in the bombings of Paris and Beirut in 2015. Since then, the work has taken on a new life and has been popularized by the recordings Choral Arts Northwest (2016), VOCES8 (2019), and Conspirare (2019). It is selected by many high school and collegiate conductors for its accessibility and contemporary form that provides a sense of familiarity to young singers.

Formal Analysis

Jake Runestad's understanding of craft and composition for the voice is made apparent in *Let My Love Be Heard*. The piece is set in the key of E-major with alternating meter signatures, but the quarter note keeps the beat throughout. Runestad's metronome marking of 40-44 beats per minute seems unrealistic for many ensembles, but it is intended to be taken more figuratively than literally. He simply wanted it to be understood that if the piece moves too fast, much is lost in translation.²¹ He actually rewrote the triplet passage in mm. 13-14 for the tenors. What was an eighth-note triplet is now a quarter note triplet at the downbeat of m. 14 because many conductors would rush through the passage (see figure 6).²²

²¹ Jake Runestad, interview by author, January 8, 2020.

²² Ibid.

Figure 6. Altered rhythmic figuration in mm. 13-14 of *Let My Love Be Heard*

The image shows a musical score for four voices (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) in mm. 13-14. The tempo is marked 'molto rit.' and the time signature is 3/4. The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The lyrics are: 'heav'n sings, heav'n sings, grief once more mounts to heav - en and sings, oo. heav'n sings,'. The Soprano part has a half note on G#4, a half note on A#4, and a half note on B4. The Alto part has a half note on G#3, a half note on A#3, and a half note on B3. The Tenor part has a half note on G#2, a half note on A#2, and a half note on B2. The Bass part has a half note on G#1, a half note on A#1, and a half note on B1. There are slurs over the first two notes of each part. A fermata is over the final note of each part. A '3' with a slur is over the last three notes of the Tenor part. A 'p' (piano) marking is under the first note of the Bass part.

The entire piece is harmonically structured around the initial progression in mm. 1-3, I—VI—IV7(add 9). The melody is first stated in the tenor voice beginning on a C-sharp while the altos sustain a C-sharp an octave up, suggesting a C-sharp minor tonality. When the melody returns at m. 18 in the soprano voice, it begins on a B-natural over an E-major chord voiced in the lower three parts implying a tonal shift to E major. From this point forward, the harmony functions to support the E-major tonality. The third chord in the initial sequence returns a number of times throughout the piece, especially at high points. The A-major chord with the added seventh and ninth is the crux of the work. Runestad explains:

It functions as a IV chord but where's the pain? Where's the sorrow? I added two other pitches, B and G-sharp, borrowed from the I chord. Thinking of these chords being an emotional quality, I would be 'home' and IV would be 'not home' and unresolved. Adding those two notes from the 'home' chord allows the IV to function as an unresolved longing for home or for comfort. That's why the chord appears so many times in the piece. It functions in a storytelling way, even though there's no text saying exactly what

it is. As a composer, in our toolboxes, we have different ways of creating meaning. For me, that chord has that kind of meaning to it.²³

The popularity of the piece is indisputable, but it does beg the question of what component of the work lends itself to such immediacy. Runestad's choice of form, while not conforming to any traditional form, is conceivably the most profound element of this composition. This conductor found that the form the piece best lends itself to is one of popular music, verse-chorus form. The "oohs" at the beginning serve as an intro and the first verse is in the tenor voice at m. 9. The chorus comes in at m. 15 with "Let my love be heard." The sopranos take the melody at verse two in m. 18. The chorus is then repeated at m. 24. The bridge begins at m. 30 and is followed with a final iteration of the verse and chorus melodies as an outro. When asked if this was intentional, Jake Runestad responded: "I think it's from absorbing a lot of music over time and finding what works and sticking with that. Every piece has a journey and my job is to find the most effective way to tell that story."²⁴ He then went on to express that he allows the text to dictate the formula for which he composes any piece.²⁵

Rehearsal Process and Conducting Considerations

Let My Love Be Heard turned out to be one of the more difficult pieces on the program. The students are familiar with use of dissonances and suspensions as well as the ethereal musical arch of the piece that characterizes music of the contemporary. The greatest challenge with this piece was the ensemble's sense of pulse. Runestad created a moment of suspended time when the text is first introduced at m. 9 in the tenor voice. The alternating of duple and triple time each

²³ Jake Runestad, interview by author, January 8, 2020.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

beat made it difficult for the ensemble to keep track of the subdivision of each beat. This issue returns at m. 31. The sustained triplet figure in the soprano and alto voices continue against the duple pick-up in the tenor and bass at m. 32. To correct this, the ensemble was often asked to count-sing during the learning process. This allowed the students to feel difference in the subdivision as a unit and as a result, they stayed together. Runestad's indicated tempo is set between 40 and 44 beats per minute, but by rehearsing this way, the ensemble was able to find a tempo at which they could most successfully perform the piece.

One of the most difficult parts is at m. 31 when the soprano and alto split into four parts singing a continued triplet figure. Getting the treble voices to count accurately and not delay their entering triplet was extremely challenging. Having the singers mark in the beat they move on as well as the solfege made a significant difference in the learning of the piece. After writing in the solfege, they were more certain of their entering pitches, which made them sing more rhythmically. They must also be encouraged to keep energy in the long notes, and most importantly, count, until the next triplet happens to avoid losing time. The conductor must be aware that the melody in the tenor and bass is the focal point and the gesture must cater to their motion. Once the treble voices are set, they must be independent enough to continue without much help from the conductor.

Review of Recordings

It would not be uncommon for many conductors to first be exposed to a piece such as *Let My Love Be Heard* via a recording or performance. In this technological era, we have the recordings of some of the world's premier ensembles readily available. Because of these modern conventions, it is even more imperative that conductors are discerning in their listening. They must also be mindful to not let that first impression color their interpretation as there are

bounteous layers to these modern compositions that can be understood a number of ways.

VOCES8 is known for their nearly perfect recordings and performances. Their recording of *Let My Love Be Heard* would be one of them if not for the wrong note sung by the basses in m. 13. There the basses sang a C-sharp instead of B-natural. Having only one voice per part lead the ensemble to make some questionable phrasing choices, for instance, breaking in the middle of a crescendo between mm. 17-18. The singers capture the arch of the piece magnificently, but this recording is not recommended to directors that are listening for the sonority of a choir of sections with more than one voice.

The recording by professional ensemble, Conspirare is acceptable in some respects as well. With full sections, the choir moves through phrases much smoother. At m. 18 where the sopranos take the melody, all the lower parts can be heard equally as opposed to a soprano dominant sound. The lower three parts should rise and fall with the melody to support the contour of the phrase but the tenor voice specifically is too present. The ensemble blends beautifully throughout the piece however, the ethereality of the climactic moments in mm. 30-45 are completely lost due to the excessive vibrato, especially in the soprano voice. While this may be a satisfactory recording to reference for certain interpretive decisions, tone quality is not one of them.

The finest recording would be that of the Bob Cole Conservatory Chamber Choir under the direction of Johnathan Talberg. The tempo Talberg performs this at is the closest any recording has been to what Runestad indicated, between 40-45 beats per minute. The ensemble approaches dynamics with a level of sensitivity that is difficult to achieve at such a slow tempo. They manage to maintain the intangible quality of Runestad's writing while staying perfectly synchronized in time. Runestad notes, "It is my favorite recording of all of my pieces. They

learned it in one rehearsal and it is just so powerful and full of grief. John, the conductor, shapes all the phrases so unbelievable beautifully and musically. It's such a stunning recording."²⁶

²⁶ Jake Runestad, interview by author, January 8, 2020.

CHAPTER SIX

NED ROREM'S

SING MY SOULD HIS WONDROUS LOVE (1962)

Biographical and Historical Context

Ned Rorem is America's most prolific composer of song, with an output of over five hundred songs, more than seventy of which are composed for choral ensemble. The Indiana native, born in 1923, was raised in Chicago and studied music theory at the American Conservatory.²⁷ He furthered his studies in the early 1940s to Northwestern University and later the Curtis Institute. In 1946, Rorem went on to study at the Berkshire Music Center with Aaron Copland and in 1947, at the Juilliard School of Music where he received both his Bachelorette and Master of Arts degrees.²⁸ In 1949, he moved to Paris and stayed until 1958. He studied under Arthur Honegger and soon after, made the acquaintance of Cocteau, Auric, and Poulenc. Rorem's creative process was influenced greatly by his exposure to the French avant-garde. Over the decades to come, his songs and cycles would gain national and international acclaim and in 1980, Rorem returned to the Curtis Institute as professor of composition where he has since received several commissions.

Rorem recognizes that the voice is the center of his compositional process "I always think vocally. Even when writing for violin or timpani, it's the vocalist in me trying to get out. Music is, after all a sung expression, and any composer worthy of the name is intrinsically a singer

²⁷ Dennis Shrock, *Choral Repertoire*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009., 741

²⁸ Ibid., 741

whether he allows it or not.”²⁹ While he is primarily known as an art song composer, Rorem is also noted for his contribution to choral music.

Rorem’s choral compositions are known for their diatonic accessibility. Alwes describes Rorem’s compositional style as “startlingly candid—even cutting—yet urbane and witty.”³⁰ Some examples of his earliest diatonic works for a capella chorus are *From an Unknown Past* and *Missa Brevis*. His ties to the church are made apparent in the abundance of sacred music he composed, e.g., *Two Psalms and a Proverb*, *Seven Motets for the Church Year*, *Little Prayers*, and numerous anthems. “Sing My Soul, His Wondrous Love,” arranged by John B. Dykes, is hymn 294 of the Protestant Episcopal Church. Rorem’s original melody and harmonic language, although more complex, remains accessible to choral ensembles of different ages and skill levels. Alwes considers the piece to be a gem in choral repertoire. About the piece, Alwes explains, “Rorem’s lovely melody is surrounded in each statement with just enough harmonic variety to keep the singer alert and interested.”³¹

Formal Analysis

As a strophic hymn of thirty-two bars, “Sing My Soul, His Wondrous Love” consists of four eight bar phrases. When incorporating Julius Herford’s score analysis, the eight bar phrases can be further analyzed as two parallel periods of (2 + 2 + 4) and (4 + 4). The piece is in E major, common time with a *moderato, molto tranquillo* tempo indication. The first strophe (A) opens

²⁹ Kimball, Carol. *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*. Rev. ed. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2006., 299

³⁰ Chester Alwes, *A History of Western Choral Music, Volume II*. Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 2016., 313

³¹ Chester Alwes, *A History of Western Choral Music, Volume II*. Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 2016., 314

with the text, “Sing my soul his wondrous love” at a *piano* dynamic level with an *espressivo* interpretive indication. The melody in the soprano voice is composed using descending leaps. The important words in the text correspond to the highest notes in the phrase. At m. 9, the dynamic level increases as the melody and text change. These eight measures (a) are treated with a similar harmonic language but a greater dynamic variation.

The key change to G major at m. 17 is coupled with a *pianissimo* dynamic marking. Those two elements along with a new line of text, “God the merciful and good” suggest the beginning of a new section (B). The melody in the new key is the same as the opening section but the eighth notes in the tenor voice add new motion to the passage. There is a decrescendo in m. 24 leading to a forte downbeat at m. 25 as we return to the key of E major. The text “Sing my soul” returns along with the melody of the second strophe. The alto voice has now added to the motion initiated by the tenors in the previous section. From m. 28 to the end, the dynamic steadily decreases to a tranquil, piano finish.

Rehearsal and Conducting Considerations

Performing *Sing My Soul His Wondrous Love* a capella seemed simple enough at first glance as it is seemingly just a thirty-two bar hymn. Rorem’s harmonic language, while easy on the ear of the listener, proved to be hard on the mind of the singer. I anticipated difficulty with intonation and the direct modulations at m. 17 and m. 25. Fortunately, the ensemble was able to maintain pitch throughout the piece and had little to no problem with the key changes. The greatest challenges in this piece came with phrasing, use of rubato and linear contour within certain vocal parts.

Achieving dynamic contrast in phrases within the context of the limited dynamic range Rorem indicated was crucial. The ensemble was well trained and fully aware of how certain

dynamic levels felt to them, but that precision is what limited their ability to grow and shape phrases early on. It is safe to say that the *molto tranquillo* tempo marking should be taken more literally than Rorem's dynamics indications. It took several rehearsals to convince the ensemble that the scope of dynamic range could be broadened slightly to achieve a richer and more vibrant tone with the appropriate dynamic contrast and forward motion.

During the score study process, it became apparent that certain phrases would need time to resonate. The amount of time taken between each phrase should be dictated by the performance space. The Fellowship Hall at First Presbyterian Church of Carbondale has about a 2.7 second reverberation time requiring a more substantial amount of time before onsets. Sadly, Rorem did not specifically indicate where those subtle lifts should be. I used the text and motion of vocal lines to superimpose those breaks at the end of mm. 4, 12, 16, 20, 24, 28, and 30. Each of these pauses were approached by a slight *ritardando* as Rorem's superb writing calls for it. A conductor must be intentional in their gesture and be completely in tune with their ensemble to ensure that they will trust their direction and respond accordingly.

I was fortunate enough to work with a remarkably accomplished ensemble that read at a high level, but the singers were still singing some incorrect notes. The sopranos had little to no difficulty as Rorem's alluring melody is easy to follow. The lower three voices had their own problem spots. The altos had the least number of issues with the note missed most consistently being the B-sharp on the downbeat of m. 16. The tenors struggled persistently with their line beginning at the key change at m. 17. The repeated 6th leaps through mm. 18-20 were not tuning until they were isolated in rehearsal a few times. The tenors also struggled in m. 21 with the ascending eighth notes until they realized the E-natural is repeated on beat three. The basses were consistent for the majority of the piece. The most prevalent inaccuracy was the A-natural

on the downbeat of m. 29. The break just before gave them time to reset for it and made more a more successful delivery of the line. To correct the note errors, this conductor made the ensemble sing this piece several times through on solfege. Rorem's use of chromaticism called for many alternate syllables that many singers in the ensemble had never used. The challenge was to first familiarize them with the extended vocabulary of the solfege system, then to further that familiarity with pitch association. Using this exercise as a warm up when this piece was scheduled for rehearsal expedited the learning process.

Review of Recordings

It is important to have quality recordings as a source of reference when studying a piece like *Sing My Soul His Wondrous Love*. With so many varied interpretations available, a conductor must know which performances are successful. The recording by the Choir of St. Thomas Fifth Avenue lead by Gerre Hancock is a failed rendering of the piece. While Hancock lets the phrases breathe appropriately, the tone of the ensemble is poorly blended. Certain voices in the soprano section are easily heard above others and this completely ruins the balance and timbre of the choir. Their soprano section did not agree on vowel shape causing them to sing the melody out of tune.

A preferred recording would be that of Vocal Essence conducted by Philip Brunelle. The ensemble is composed of thirty-two solo singers so the sonority is much closer to that of the classroom. Brunelle chose a tempo that moves much faster than Hancock's, allowing for a greater sense of forward motion. The use of vibrato is excessive however, the piece does call for a certain warmth achieved by a vibrant tone. The vibrato does not distort the blend as it is consistent in every voice part.

Among the finest recordings of the piece is that of the Incantation Choir directed by Scott

Dettra. The tempo of this recording is somewhere between both of the previous recordings discussed. Dettra's use of rubato is tasteful and appropriate for this modern hymn. The ensemble achieves a near perfect blend and warmth of tone. Of all the recordings in existence, Vocal Essence and the Incantation Choir are some of the most reliable.

CHAPTER SEVEN
AARON COPLAND'S
***CHING-A-RING CHAW* (1952)**

Biographical and Historical Context

Aaron Copland epitomizes American music as his compositions embody a unique native quality that gives sound to the American spirit. Embracing a wide variety of styles ranging from jazz to serialism, he had an uncanny ability to capture an essentially American sound.³² Born in Brooklyn, New York to Jewish immigrant parents, Copland began his formal studies of music in Manhattan in 1917 with Ruben Goldmark rather than pursuing a university degree immediately following high school. He started piano lessons around the same time and supplemented his education by attending concerts, operas, and dance recitals. In 1921, he spent the summer at the American Conservatory and traveled to Paris that fall. There he met Nadia Boulanger and expressed his worries of seeking her tutelage, “No one to my knowledge had ever before thought of studying composition with a woman.”³³ Though skeptical at first, Boulanger was his most influential teacher. As he reflected on his time with her stating that he had never seen such enthusiasm and clarity in teaching.³⁴ After studying with Boulanger for three years, he returned the United States to make a living as a composer.

Copland's compositional output is broken up into three periods, the third being most integral to the choral idiom. From 1935-1955, Copland found himself at the service of the nation

³² Chester Alwes, *A History of Western Choral Music, Volume II*. Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 2016., 299

³³ Julia Smith. *Aaron Copland: His Work and Contribution to American Music*. [1st ed.]. New York: Dutton, 1955., 41

³⁴ Ibid., 41

in the advent of World War II.³⁵ This point in his compositional output is also known as his American Folk Song Period. During this period, he had composed seminal works such as *A Lincoln Portrait*, *Fanfare for the Common Man*, and *Preamble for a Solemn Occasion*.

Copland's choral music exhibits this folk art in a much more tangible and relatable way. His most popular American folk compositions in the choral medium include *At the River*, *Long time ago*, "The Promise of Living" from his opera *The Tender Land*, and the minstrel song, *Ching-a-ring Chaw*.

Formal Analysis

Ching-a-ring Chaw is a minstrel song through which Copland demonstrates the progression of American society. The reason a piece like this can and should still be performed today is because of the restructured text. Copland changed the word "darkee" to "larkee" and reworked the theme around the "promised land" from its original reference to Haiti as a haven for negro slaves. The coda with the shout at the end was added to detract from its burdened history as well.

The strophic song is set in D major and in 2/4 time. Copland suggest 138 beats per minute with his interpretive marking being 'lively tempo (with bounce).' The piece is quite repetitive with the only element changing being the texture of the iterations of the theme. The voices start together in m. 4 over the "oom-pah" accompaniment. In m. 6, the tenors and basses begin the next strophe with the soprano and altos in canon entering one measure later. This texture continues until m. 38 where all voices enter homophonically again for the first time since the beginning. At the climax, in m. 69, the accompaniment becomes more involved taking a form

³⁵ Julia Smith. *Aaron Copland: His Work and Contribution to American Music*. [1st ed.]. New York: Dutton, 1955., 222

of its own, independent of the voices as they are once again singing the same rhythms. The coda begins at m. 97. The choir has stretto entrances beginning with the alto over the returned “oom-pah” accompaniment until the shout at the end of the piece.

Rehearsal and Conducting Considerations

Ching-a-ring Chaw was the perfect closer for the program by providing rhythm and vitality to the end of the concert. This piece was by far the easiest to teach. The nature of the piece not only kept the singers engaged but they were excited to face the rhythmic challenges it presented. The greatest challenge came from vowel shape, tempo, and dynamics.

In the beginning, the ensemble needed to focus on singing accurate rhythms and pitches so they were instructed to sing on a “dee.” This worked well for them learning the piece as well as a preventative measure for the strident [i] vowels to ensure during the “ching-a-ring-a-ring” sections. The students were able to focus on notes and rhythms, as well as vowel integrity. The choir was directed to resort back to this exercise when the vowel became too lateral as the rehearsal process continued.

Copland suggested 138 beats per minute, however the piece certainly begged to move quicker. The choir tried it at varying tempos up to 144 beats per minute. The choir sang the majority of the piece marvelously at that tempo with the exception of the “ching-a-ring-a-ring” sections. After slowing the section down to ensure confidence and accuracy on pitches and counting, it was revealed that the ‘r’ consonant was slowing the piece down so drastically. The choir was divided into two halves. One would sing “ching-a-ring-a-ring” with a minimized ‘r,’ the other half would sing “ching-a-ding-a-ding” to counteract the slowing of the consonant. The singers were able to then sing the piece up to 142 beats per minute confidently.

Ching-a-ring Chaw, while fun to sing, must be executed with precision to allow the

audience to have fun listening. The dynamic nuances at each strophe are a crucial factor in the success of this piece. The choir had a tendency to sing all of them at the same stagnant volume. To correct this, they were given more precise dynamic instruction for each section. Those sections were then isolated and sung in succession to emphasize the difference in each passage. This made the volume differences much more apparent to the singers and they were able to execute the changes consistently.

Review of Recordings

There are many excellent recordings of this piece. A representative recording of this work would be one that pays close attention to detail and precision in dynamics, vowels, and balance at a tempo the chorus can best perform it. An exemplary recording would be that of the Camerata Singers conducted by Timothy Mount. Though Mount takes the piece at approximately 124 beats per minute, the energy of the piece is not compromised. The chorus sings with a healthy vibrant and balanced tone and does an amazingly with blending vowels through the diphthongs.

The recording by the US Army Field Band Soldiers Chorus is another commendable interpretation. The chorus performs with a full wind symphony accompaniment providing a new sound scope for the piece. They performed it at 142 beats per minute and paid close attention to accents and dynamics. The accented entrances through the staggered “ching-a-ring-a-ring” section at m. 97 added a percussive element driving to the end of the piece.

This piece also lends itself to ensembles of younger age groups as well. An unidentified high school performed this piece with outstanding precision. The choir flips the “r” in the “ching-a-ring” avoiding any lingering or sustained sound that would pull back the tempo. These intellectual singers manage to keep purity and integrity in their vowels while delivering a fun and energetic performance. *Ching-A-Ring Chaw* is accessible to ensembles of varying age and skill

level. The recordings by the Camarata Singers, the US Army Field Band Soldiers Chorus, and the unidentified high school all demonstrate the transcendent qualities of the piece.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SUMMARIZED REHEARSAL PLANS

“Abendlied”

Week 1

- Sight read on a “doo”
 - Make singers acknowledge dynamics while sight reading
- Incorporate more dynamics in phrases
- Solidify phrasing
- Keep forward motion
- Isolate voice crossing in alto and tenor at m. 35
- Isolate m. 41 to end

Week 2

- Sing from beginning on “doo”
- Add text at beginning
 - Sing opening phrase on text

Week 3

- Review from last week
- Finish text
- Balance alto, tenor, and bass at m. 29
- More sensitivity to dynamics
- Soprano modify vowel on high F

Week 4

- Review text m. 29
- Continue shaping phrases

Week 6

- Review dynamics
- Get past beginning consonants at mm. 3, 9, 21, 29
- Keep consistent tempo when piano drops out at mm. 16, and 47-end

Week 7

- Review German as needed
- Address late consonants as needed
- Fix dynamics and tempo as needed

In Remembrance

Week 1

- Sight read from beginning on solfege
- Sight read m. 61-end
- Check alto at m. 16
- Check basses at m. 33
 - Make sure basses sing “ah”
- Encourage warm, balanced, and full bodied tone

Week 3

- Review divisi
- Encourage beautiful tone
 - Measure 23 Sing on blended “dee”
 - Basses avoid carrying chest resonance above C4
- Check suspensions
 - Specifically, soprano and alto m. 14

Week 4

- Only checking retention
- Check vowel on “rest”
- Shape the ending through the fermatas
- Greater dynamic contrast

Week 5

- Check metronome! 62 beats per minute
- Check retention and accuracy on “doo” to encourage beautiful tone
- Review interpretation notes given as needed
 - decrescendo m. 43
 - ‘d’ on beat 1 m. 44 with shadow vowel
 - measure 44. mf < f m. 45 > mp m. 47
 - for(saken) more detached
 - Cut off on 1 m. 48
- Rehearse from beginning

Week 7

- Rehearse with Horn
 - Talk through the horn part
- Check dynamics
- Rehearse from beginning with Horn

Messa da Capella a quattro voci (SV 257)**“Kyrie”**Week 1

- Sight read on text
- Discuss importance of each voice part
- Encourage singers to be independent with phrasing

Week 3

- Focus on vowels; open “eh”
- Dynamic contrast within phrases
- More “k” where scored
- Shorten repeated notes
 - Soprano m. 23-24
 - Alto m. 12
 - Tenor mm. 18, 20
 - Bass m. 19

Week 5

- Check retention
- Continue to shape phrases

Week 7

- Check retention

“Gloria”Week 1

- Sight read on “da” to m. 67
- Discuss text and independence of line

Week 2

- Break down into sections dictated by text
- Rehearse each section
- Renaissance forte at m. 25
- Read m. 67-118

Week 3

- Review up to m. 118
- Gradually speed up tempo

Week 4

- Review text as necessary
- Give specific dynamic instruction
 - Start piano, crescendo to high point, decrescendo to cadence
 - Dynamics should follow contour of line
 - Leaps of fourth or fifth should crescendo

Week 5

- Check retention
- Continue to shape phrases
- Encourage percussive consonants
 - “cum sancto”
 - “tu solus”

Week 6

- Isolate sections from the end to the beginning
- Rehearse from beginning

Week 7

- Check retention

“Agnus Dei”Week 3

- Sight read on “da”
- Transfer understanding of Renaissance phrasing from “Kyrie”

Week 4

- Give specific dynamic instruction
 - Start piano, crescendo to high point, decrescendo to cadence

- Dynamics should follow contour of line
- Leaps of fourth or fifth should crescendo

Week 6

- Give specific dynamic instruction
 - Start piano, crescendo to high point, decrescendo to cadence
 - Dynamics should follow contour of line
 - Leaps of fourth or fifth should crescendo
- Review pitches on “da” to check accuracy
- Add text and rehearse from beginning

Week 7

- Check retention

“Their Bodies are Buried in Peace”Week 1

- Sight read first A section on text
- Sight read B section in fast 4
 - Add quarter rest on beat 4 at the end of phrases

Week 2

- Speed up B sections
- Style
 - Dance, light, pure tone
- No American R!

Week 3

- Rehearse b sections on staccato “doot”
 - Add text, keep lightness and dance in sound
- Check slow tempo
- Rehearse from beginning

Week 4

- Give more specific dynamic instruction for A sections

Week 5

- Check pickup to m. 25 on staccato “doot”
- Rehearse from beginning
 - CHECK METRONOME
- Fix cut offs and consonants as needed

Week 7

- Check retention
- Fix as needed

Let My Love Be HeardWeek 1

- Sight read on text at 60 beats per minute
- Check balance of soprano and alto divisi at m. 30
- Coordinate molto rit

Week 2

- Count sing from m. 30
- Count sing from m. 9
- Rehearse from beginning, melody always count sing
- “Whispering” off on beat 3, cue “in your”
- Rehearse from beginning on “da”

Week 4

- Sing last page to refresh memory
- Sing from the beginning on a subdivided “da”
 - All parts switching duple to triple with melody
- Specify dynamics pg. 5-8
- Check balance and dynamics of alto, tenor, and bass at m. 18

Week 5

- Rehearse transition into pg. 5 starting at m. 18
- Have choir stand in a circle and rehearse from beginning

Week 6

- Fix problems on last page
 - Have the singers write in solfege for triplet figures
 - Have the singers mark which beat they enter
- Run m. 30 to end on subdivided “da”
 - Have the singers write in solfege

Week 7

- Rehearse from beginning
- Fix as needed

Sing My Soul His Wondrous LoveWeek 1

- Sight read on solfege
 - Teach accidentals

Week 2

- Dynamics
- Phrasing
- Allow the phrases to breathe

Week 3

- Solidify modulations
- Rehearse from beginning without piano

Week 4

- Sing on vowels only
- Isolate each eight bar phrase
 - Once with piano, once without

Week 5

- Fix tenors at pg. 3
- Check transitions and modulations
- Rehearse without piano

- Make note of things to fix at the next rehearsal

Week 6

- Fix basses last page
- Fix tenors pg. 3
- Continue isolation and repetition

Week 7

- Keep forward motion!
- Lessen diphthong on “my”
- Rehearse from beginning

Ching-A-Ring Chaw

Week 1

- Speak text in rhythm pg. 1-6
 - Add pitch
- Sing under tempo
- Check precision of consonants
- Check for integrity of [i] vowel

Week 2

- Sight read pg. 11-end
- Speak rhythm slowly at pg. 14
 - Add pitches
 - Speed up gradually
- Speak rhythm slowly at pg. 11-14
 - Add pitches
 - Speed up gradually
- Sing from beginning on tall “dee”

Week 4

- Review pg. 7
- Review pg. 11-end
- Rehearse from beginning at 138 beats per minute
 - CHECK METRONOME!

Week 5

- Rehearse from the beginning
 - Record and play back in rehearsal
 - Challenge singers to be more precise with rhythms
 - Vowels need more integrity throughout

Week 7

- Check tempo for the space
 - 138
 - 142
 - 144

APPENDIX B

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

“Abendlied”

Friedlich bekämpfen Nacht sich und Tag;
 wie das zu dämpfen, wie das zu lösen
 vermag.
 Der mich bedrückte, schläfst du schon,
 Schmerz?
 Was mich beglückte, was war's doch, mein
 Herz?
 Freude wie Kummer, fühl ich, zerran,
 aber den Schlummer führten sie leise heran.
 Und im Entschweben, immer empor,
 kommt mir das Leben ganz wie ein
 Schlummerlied vor.

Night and day are engaged in peaceful
 struggle
 as if they are able to dampen or to dissolve.
 Are you asleep, Grief, who depressed me?
 What was it then, my heart, that made me
 happy?
 Both joy and sorrow, I feel, did melt away
 but gently they introduced the slumber.
 And, while evermore floating upward,
 life itself appears to me like a lullaby

In Remembrance

Lux aeterna
 Eternal light
 Luceat eis
 Shine upon them
 Domine
 O Lord

Turn to me and be gracious,
 For my heart is in distress.
 Oh God, my God,
 Why hast thou forsaken me?
 My tears linger at night,
 But joy comes in the morning light.

Lord, in your infinite mercy,
 Grant them rest.
 Rest forever more.

*Messa da Capella a quattro voci (SV 257)***“Kyrie”**

Kyrie eleison.
 Christe eleison.
 Kyrie eleison.

Lord, have mercy.
 Christ, have mercy.
 Lord, have mercy.

“Gloria”

Gloria in excelsis Deo.
 Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.
 Laudamus te. Benedicimus te.
 Adoramus te. Glorificamus te.
 Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam
 tuam.
 Domine Deus, Rex caelestis, Deus Pater
 omnipotens.
 Domine Fili unigenite, Iesu Christe.
 Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris.
 Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
 Qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe
 deprecationem nostram.
 Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserere
 nobis.
 Quoniam tu solus Sanctus. Tu solus
 Dominus.
 Tu solus Altissimus, Iesu Christe.
 Cum Sancto Spiritu, in gloria Dei Patris.
 Amen.

Glory be to God on high,
 and on earth peace, good will towards men.
 We praise thee, we bless thee,
 we worship thee, we glorify thee,
 we give thanks to thee for thy great glory,
 O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father
 Almighty.
 O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ;
 O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the
 Father,
 Thou that takest away the sins of the world,
 have mercy upon us.
 Thou that takest away the sins of the world,
 receive our prayer.
 Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the
 Father, have mercy upon us.
 For thou only art holy; thou only art the
 Lord;
 thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost,
 art most high in the glory of God the Father.
 Amen.

“Agnus Dei”

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
 miserere nobis.
 Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
 miserere nobis.
 Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona
 nobis pacem.

Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the
 world, have mercy on us.
 Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the
 world, have mercy on us.
 Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the
 world, grant us peace.

“Their Bodies Are Buried in Peace”

Their bodies are buried in peace
But their name liveth ever more

Let My Love Be Heard

Angels, where you soar
Up to God's own light,
Take my own lost bird
On your hearts tonight;
And as grief once more
Mounts to heaven and sings,
Let my love be heard
Whispering in your wings.

Sing My Soul His Wondrous Love

Sing, my soul, his wondrous love,
who, from yon bright throne above,
ever watchful o'er our race,
still to us extends his grace.

Heaven and earth by him were made;
all is by his scepter swayed;
what are we that he should show
so much love to us below?

God, the merciful and good,
bought us with the Savior's blood,
and, to make salvation sure,
guides us by his Spirit pure.

Ching-a-Ring Chaw

Ching-a-ring-a ring ching ching,
Ho a ding-a-ding kum larkee,
Ching-a-ring-a ring ching ching,
Ho a ding kum larkee.

Brothers gather round,
Listen to this story,
'Bout the promised land,
An' the promised glory.

You don't need to fear,
 If you have no money,
 You don't need none there,
 To buy you milk and honey.

There you'll ride in style,
 Coach with four white horses,
 There the evenin' meal,
 Has one two three four courses.

Nights we all will dance
 To the harp and fiddle,
 Waltz and jig and prance,
 "And Cast off down the middle!"

When the mornin' come,
 All in grand and splendour,
 Stand out in the sun,
 And hear the holy thunder!

Brothers hear me out,
 The promised land's a-comin'
 Dance and sing and shout,
 I hear them harps a strummin'.
 Ching-a-ring-a ching
 ching ching, ching a ring ching
 Ching-a-ring-a ching ching,
 Ching a Ching a Ching chning
 ching-a-ring-a,
 ching-a-ring-a,
 ching-a-ring-a,
 ring, ching ching ching CHAW!

APPENDIX C

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

“Abendlied”

Milwaukee Chamber Choir: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzNM8FpRDMY>

Monteverdi Choir: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIGPKC_qth4

Robert Shaw Festival Chorus: <https://music.apple.com/us/album/abendlied-op-92-no-3/74720118?i=74720100>

In Remembrance

OMEA District 2 2012 Honors Choir: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WuMZm1kEulA>

Collegiate Mixed Honor Choir at the ACDA National Convention 2017: <https://music.apple.com/us/album/in-remembrance-live/1286374474?i=1286374685>

Messa da Capella a quattro voci (SV 257)

Akadêmia: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GNuDS15-jk>

Choir of St. John’s College: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=23Q3GTe7UvY>

Ensemble Elyma: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=baLuo3pspE&list=PLr0MsaDpKsY_0JsarlLO_tWGJAKus_mcb&index=6

“Their Bodies are Buried in Peace”

Monteverdi Choir: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VEIqetv_GAY

Bavarian Radio Chorus: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_cSyrLUZL-U

Rassat Vocal Ensemble: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGZrG9nNXRM>

Let My Love Be Heard

VOCES8: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tz35QhCDLwQ>

Conspirare: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TL6Utlf6h8w>

Bob Cole Conservatory Chamber Choir: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bh5uH5ojFto>

Sing My Soul His Wondrous Love

Choir of St. Thomas Fifth Avenue: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXo9ys_O_2M

Vocal Essence: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zOxmJCCo1L4>

Incantation Choir: <https://music.apple.com/us/album/sing-my-soul-his-wondrous-love/1363133719?i=1363134174>

Ching-A-Ring Chaw

Camarata Singers: <https://music.apple.com/us/album/ching-a-ring-chaw/267192453?i=267193883>

US Army Field Band Soldiers Chorus: <https://music.apple.com/us/album/ching-a-ring-chaw/162561867?i=162562292>

Unidentified High School Choir: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FqYoe_in7Co

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Bachelor of Science, Music Liberal Arts, 2017

Research Paper Title:

A CONDUCTORS GUIDE: JOHANES BRAHMS'S "ABENDLIED", JEFFREY AMES'S *IN REMEMBRANCE*, CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI'S *MISSA DA CAPELLA A QUATTRO VOCI (SV 257)*, GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL'S "THEIR BODIES ARE BURRIED IN PEACE", JAKE RUNESTAD'S *LET MY LOVE BE HEARD*, NED ROEM'S *SING MY SOULD HIS WONDROUS LOVE*, AARON COPLAND'S *CHING-A-RING CHAW*

Major Professor: Susan G. Davenport