

2021 Nebraska All State Mixed Choir

Performance Notes • Nov. 17-19, 2021

Dr. Lee Nelson, conductor

Congratulations on making it into the 2021 Nebraska All State Mixed Choir! This is a tremendous honor and you should feel a true sense of accomplishment. I can clearly remember my time as an all state singer and the absolute JOY of singing with other fantastic voices (that were much better than mine!) It was that experience that motivated me to study music in college and dedicate my life to making music. It will be a joy to share in this unforgettable and transformative experience together next week!

We have a short time together in rehearsal so as you prepare the music, I ask that you use the notes below to guide your learning. I ask that you to number each measure in each song. In rehearsal, I will refer to measure numbers rather than pages or lines. It is very important that you do this. I have chosen a diverse program that features historic choral works by George Fredric Handel and Clara Schumann, music by two Midwest composers, Elaine Hagenberg and Jake Runestad, a great gospel piece by Dr. Jeffery Ames and a relatively new work by Melanie DeMore who describes herself as a songwriter and an “emissary of tolerance, kindness, and harmony.” I hope you enjoy preparing the music and I look forward to working with many of you in November. Good luck with your audition!

Warmest Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lee Nelson", with a large, stylized initial "L".

Dr. Lee Nelson

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Your Voices Tune (from *Alexander's Feast*) - G. F. Handel, edited by Don Malin (Belwin/Alfred)

Your Voices Tune is a chorus from Handel's oratorio *Alexander's Feast*. Written in 1736, a time in which Handel was trying to find an alternative to opera in his compositional output. Handel wrote the piece in homage to St. Cecilia, the Patron Saint of Music. The first performance of *Alexander's Feast* took place in Covent Garden in February, 1736.

Some notes:

- Opening section, marked *andante allegro* should be performed at quarter note = 92. (ignore editor's marking). Handel's tempo indication indicates a lively walking tempo.
- The first chorus entry is *forte*, *poco marcato*, with particular emphasis given to the important syllables, "voi", tune, raise, high, with particular emphasis on the latter. The next phrase evolves similarly, care being taken to emphasize the important syllables, ech, vaul, sky. "The blest Cecilia's name" should be uttered with more reverence.
- At the pickup to M.11, we will observe the *f* marking crescendo through m13 to the word "fame."
- The second section, in a lovely dance meter, should be taken at about dotted quarter equals 62 . . . (much faster than the editors marking in parentheses).
- The editors marking of *Forte* is a bit much I think. Better to sing this with some reverence and love as the text suggests. A gently rocking *mezzo forte* is more appropriate to the mood.
- Pay particular attention to the slurring in the sop and bass lines. In baroque music the first note of a slur is emphasized SLIGHTLY and the second note of the slur is considerably softer.
- Sopranos, make sure the sixteenth notes in m. 27 are short and crisp, ignore the slur in this instance, except that the first note should be the strongest in the slur. Ignore the eighth rest in m28 and put the release exactly on the downbeat of measure 29.
- m.35, please put an eighth rest at the end of the measure and observe the dynamic marking.
- In m. 36, a slight crescendo from "Sa" to "Har" and then back.
- m. 40, sing very lightly, *mp*. 41 slightly stronger, 42 slightly stronger still. At 44, observe the dynamic marking.
- M. 45 take an eighth rest at the end of the measure.
- M. 46. Back to *mp*.
- m. 48, please put an eighth rest at the end of the measure.
- mm. 50-53 sing with great expressiveness. Tied notes in the soprano and alto parts should fade to silence. All voices should lift slightly before m. 54. M 55, all voices take an eighth rest at the end of the measure.
- Ignore the rest at the end of m. 57 and carry over to m. 58.
- Observe breath mark in measure 60.

- The recap at m.61 should unfold like the opening on p. 6.
- M. 67 will be *mp* and m. 71 will be *forte*.

Liebst du um Schönheit, Op. 12, No.4 (1841)

Clara Wieck Schumann (1819-1896) arranged by James McCullough

Clara Schumann was an incredible pianist and composer in the 19th century. She was married to the more historically famous Robert Schumann, however, her music is now becoming more and more recognized and celebrated.

This arrangement of one of her famous songs is filled with *tempo rubato*. Please observe all *ritardandos* and *a tempo* markings in the score. Also, observe the *tenuto* markings and various accents over the notes-giving them emphasis and time. In almost every case the music moves to these markings and then dynamically releases.

***German IPA pronunciation and translation can be found on the last three pages of this document.*

***We Can Mend the Sky* - Jake Runestad, (Jake Runestad Music LLC) SATB choir, soloists and percussion**

Jake Runestad's sister was an English teacher at the Minnesota International Middle School in Minneapolis which provides a safe and inclusive environment for East African immigrant students to learn (many of whom are Somali). Most of these students came to the USA to escape the violent civil war that has plagued Somalia since 1991. Seeking a better life for their children, these students' parents risked their lives to come to the USA - a valiant act of love. Mr. Runestad wanted to tell their story through music and so he asked his sister to have her students write poems about their experiences leaving their home and coming to the USA. He received over 100 poems that contain passion, pride, emotion, and vivid stories of the sights and sounds that these young people have experienced. He sifted through these texts and found the powerful words of 14-year-old Warda Mohamed that became the backbone of the composition. Using Warda's poem and two Somali proverbs, "We Can Mend the Sky" is a musical depiction of one's journey as an immigrant and an affirmation of hope as we all embrace the diversity around us.

I plan to use two soloists in this piece, one for the first 18 pages then another soloist will enter on p. 19 to the end. There is an opportunity for many students to improvise on pages 22-23. I hope to use 15+ students for this section. Thankfully, Mr. Runestad puts in all the breath marks for us throughout the work.

***I Will Be a Child of Peace* - Elaine Hagenberg (Beckenhorst Press) - SATB with Piano**

This beautiful work by Iowa composer, Elaine Hagenberg, is an arrangement of a Shaker hymn tune called "O Holy Father." It has been attributed to Alonzo Filman of the Shaker community in Alfred, Maine in 1851. Shaker music was traditionally sung in unison and without accompaniment, with men on the left and women on the right. This arrangement echoes those voices of the past with each stanza starting with unison - first by the women, followed by the men, then unfolding into full five-part harmony. Ms. Hagenberg was originally drawn to this song by the beautiful simplicity of the Shaker melody, unique 5/4 meter and, most importantly, the uplifting text of a prayer of peace and purity.

We will follow Ms. Hagenberg's breath marks and rests throughout the piece. Please pay special attention to her dynamic markings as you prepare this beautiful piece.

Blessed Be! - Melanie DeMore - a cappella and walking stick

"Blessed Be!" is a celebration of life that uses the "tree of life" metaphor to joyfully express our gratitude for human connection-to generations that have come before us and those yet to come. Melanie DeMore shares the following, when talking about her

inspiration for the text in "Blessed Be! "

"Trees are shelter. Trees are sanctuary and symbols of antiquity and strength. Trees are the living embodiment of the passage of time. They endure scarring and disease, and they become gnarled and creaky, yet they remain steadfast. They can grow despite the changes happening around them. Trees live in harmony with their surroundings much longer than humans do. They are always an inspiration, especially in winter when their skeleton forms can be seen against the pale sky."

Rejoice Jeffery L. Ames (b. 1969) - SATB divisi with piano, electric bass, trapset - gospel setting that features female and male soloists (Santa Barbara Music - SBMP728)

Here is an uplifting gospel piece to close the program. Jeffery L. Ames is the director of choral activities at Belmont University in Nashville, TN. This selection will also feature the accompanist as well as an electric bass player and trap-set player.

- Opening section is very rhythmic and *non legato*
- No breath in m. 2
- "Battle" pronounced with a D, rather a hard T
- No hard T word endings, i.e. "out" (implode the t)
- Mix some "ih" vowel into the "ee" vowel in "Re-joice," so it is more rounded than horizontal
- In m. 12, add a quarter rest on beat 3
- Add slight lifts *before* each accented note when the rhythm is syncopated

Examples: mm. 16, 17,21,23,27, etc.

The mezzo soloist (pp. 8-9) and tenor soloist (pp. 10-11) will be chosen at the all-state festival. They also will sing brief improvisations on pp. 18-19.

Have a great time preparing and singing the 2021 Nebraska All-State Chorus repertoire!