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2022

## Graduate Choral Recital

William Goliger

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MUAP 622 RC- Recital: Choral

Program Notes

April 30, 2022

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) paved an unconventional path to become a composer. Born in Venice where his father, Giovanni Battista was a violinist at St. Mark's Basilica, Vivaldi was not trained to be a musician, though it is clear that he studied violin at a young age. Instead, he studied to be a priest, and was ordained in March 1703. In September 1703, Vivaldi was appointed *maestro di violino* at the Ospedale de Pietá, a Venetian orphanage for girls devoted to musical training and performance. Over the years, he was promoted to successively higher ranks, culminating in his appointment to the position of *maestro di capella* in 1735. His time at the Ospedale de Pietá was tumultuous. At one point, the institution could not afford to retain him, and at other times Vivaldi took long absences to travel Europe to compose and attend performances of his operas. In 1737, Vivaldi left the priesthood after the Church censured him for inappropriate conduct. In 1738, Vivaldi was terminated from the Ospedale de Pietá. He returned to Vienna, where he died in 1741.<sup>1</sup>

As a composer, Vivaldi is most famous for his numerous instrumental compositions (most famous among these compositions is Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*). Vivaldi composed most of his choral works around 1715. It is believed that Vivaldi composed for performance by the girls at the Ospedale. During that time, he composed a mass, which was lost. The *Gloria* we know today is actually one of two Glorias Vivaldi composed at approximately the same time. After two hundred years of obscurity, the *Gloria* we perform today was unveiled at a concert in 1939 and has become one of the most popular choral-orchestral works of all time. It is possible that *Gloria* was originally a movement of his lost mass, however musicologists generally treat this *Gloria* as its own work due to its length and the fact that the entirety of the mass has never been recovered. Vivaldi's music has unmistakable characteristics of the Baroque Era. He often utilizes simple harmonies and homophonic texture, combining these elements with somewhat

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<sup>1</sup> Dennis Shrock, *Choral Repertoire* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc, 2009), 217-218.

ornamental instrumental lines and fungal moments. These aspects are the pillars of Baroque music.<sup>2</sup>

The first movement of the piece, “Gloria” opens with energetic D Major fanfares in the orchestra, emphasized by trumpet and oboe. The chorus triumphantly declaims the text in, while the orchestra presents most of the melodic intrigue in the movement. The triumphant, up tempo text declamation and forte dynamic perfectly convey the sense of resolve as the chorus proclaims God’s glory.

“Et in Terra Pax” (translating to “and on Earth peace”) is a stark contrast from the resplendent opening. This movement is much slower, in the key of B Minor, and has a legato feeling. This movement is the longest, with the length and frequent modulations serving as the metaphorical winding road toward peace in our world. “Laudamus Te,” a swift movement of praise, is a lively soprano and mezzo-soprano duet. The text of this movement translates to “we praise you,” making Vivaldi’s choice of setting this movement apt as it portrays two singers working to praise God. This duet also gives us a hint as to the musical skill of the girls Vivaldi was composing for at the Ospedale.

“Gratias Agimus” (“we thank you”) serves as a short, but grand declaration of gratitude and an introduction to the buoyant fugue “Propter Magnam Gloriam” (“for the great glory”). “Propter Magnam” is characterized by melismatic singing, which conveys a feeling of mystique and the winding road that is the Glory of God. Melismatic singing was also a staple of Baroque choral music and incorporated often by great Baroque composers such as J.S. Bach.

“Domine Deus” (“Lord God”) is an angelic, elegant duet between oboe and soprano. “Domine Fili Unigenite” (“my only begotten son”) is a very rhythmic movement, featuring French saccade rhythms (two notes: long and short in a jerky style). Voice parts will pair up

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<sup>2</sup> Shrock, *Choral Repertoire*, 218.

throughout, creating the feeling of a courtly dance. “Domine Deus, Agnus Dei” (“Lord God, Lamb of God”), which is much slower in tempo and simpler in texture, serves as a stark contrast from the movement before. This movement features a stately mezzo-soprano and cello duet, with the choir serving in a supporting role.

The choir returns to prominence in the ninth movement, “Qui Tollis Peccata Mundi” (“Who takes away the sin of the world”) serving as a heart-rending recognition of the sin of man and a plea for salvation, with the “Suscipe section” highlighting the urgency of the plea by employing a much faster tempo. “Qui Sedes ad dexteram Patris” (“Who sits at the right hand of the Father”) is a dance-like mezzo-soprano solo with orchestral accompaniment. The string accompaniment contains recollections of the opening movement, which sets up the next movement “Quoniam tu solus Sanctus” (“For You alone are holy”) which serves as both a brief restatement of the opening movement and an answer to the prayer in the previous aria.

The final movement, “Cum Sancto Spiritu” (“With the Holy Spirit”) is a triumphant stile antico (old style) double fugue with two separate cum sancto subjects, the first being boisterous and brass-like in tessitura and the second being softer and ornamental in sound. Amens decorate both subjects. It truly does serve as the perfect ending to this work. In truth, this movement is not Vivaldi’s work. He adapted it from a work by his now-forgotten contemporary Giovanni Maria Ruggieri and expanded it into this glorious finale.

Peter Anglea (born 1988) is a graduate of Bob Jones University in Greenville, SC. Anglea received his master’s degree in composition in 2011, having been mentored by esteemed faculty such as Dan Forrest, Warren Cook, Joan Pinkston, and others. Anglea’s works have been featured at Piccolo Spoleto, Regional and National ACDA events, and numerous academic concerts worldwide. Anglea has composed and published both hymns and choral octavos.

Overall, his music has a more contemporary sound to it. He regularly utilizes dissonances to build tension. A few of his pieces, especially *Jubilate Deo*, are quite intricate rhythmically, which provides a welcome contrast to the more straightforward rhythmic feeling of the music of Vivaldi. In addition to composing, Anglea currently serves as the Choir Director at Community Baptist Church of Greer, SC. Anglea and his wife Rebekah currently reside in Greenville, SC.<sup>3</sup>

*Jubilate Deo* is a unique, intricate, and joyful piece. The text of this piece translates as follows:

Jubilate Deo, omnis terra;  
servite Domino in laetitia.  
Introite in conspectu ejus  
in exultatione.

Make a joyful noise unto  
the Lord, all ye lands.  
Serve the Lord with  
gladness: come before his presence with  
singing.

Quoniam suavis est Dominus:  
in aeternum misericordia ejus,  
et usque in generationem  
et generationem veritas ejus.

For the Lord is good;  
his mercy is everlasting;  
and his truth endureth  
to all generations.

The A Major tonality (later modulating to B Major) conveys the joy proclaimed throughout the piece. Right away, this piece introduces a “jubilate deo ostinato” in the alto, tenor, and bass voices that is repeated throughout the piece. This ostinato is written in 10/8 meter, which is infrequently used in choral music. The sopranos layer over this ostinato as the piece crescendos from a piano dynamic climaxing at a forte dynamic, leading into an expansion of the text. This section is written in 6/8, but alternates between a duple and a triple feel. The dynamic contrast in this section is noteworthy, particularly in the “introite” section of text. The dynamic is at a mezzo-forte as the choir sings “serve the Lord with gladness” and crescendos to a forte as the choir sings “come before his presence with singing” and repeats that line. This dynamic contrast

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Anglea, “About/Bio-Peter Anglea” (2021), <https://peteranglea.com/bio/>.

perfectly captures the emotive nature of this particular text. From here, the dynamic drops to a mezzo-forte as the jubilate deo ostinato and layered soprano part return to transition the piece to the second stanza of text. This stanza is set in 4/4 meter which allows for clearer text declamation of this particular stanza than the previous 10/8 or 6/8 meters would provide. This section leads to a meter change back to 6/8 and a call and response between SA and TB on the text “in generationem.” This call and response crescendos and climaxes in a modulation to B Major. This modulation signifies the joy and tension that has been building up throughout the piece finally being released. The jubilate deo ostinato returns, however this iteration of the ostinato is slightly different. The basses and altos sing the ostinato; the bass part here splits, with the bass 1 covering what the tenor had been singing in the previous iterations of the ostinato. The tenors join the sopranos in layering text over the ostinato; the tenors and sopranos split, with soprano and tenor 1 singing in octaves, and soprano and tenor 2 singing in octaves. The denser layering of text, along with the forte dynamic, signify that the joy released by the modulation is being fully expressed. There is a decrescendo to a mezzo-piano dynamic and a piano interlude to set up a final triumphant declaration of “jubilate deo omnis terra.”

According to his biography, C. Rand Matheson (born 2003) is a high school senior at St. Michael-Albertville High School in St. Michael, MN. At St. Michael-Albertville, Matheson is an active member of the music department. Matheson is a member of the STMA Concert Choir, which is “a group known throughout the Midwest for their consistently engaging performances and high quality of musical output.”<sup>4</sup> He serves as the president of the choir and as tenor 2 section leader. He studies both private voice and composition with Brian Berger and plans to pursue a degree in music after graduating high school.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> C. Rand Matheson, “Biography” included with *Be Still, My Soul* (2021).

<sup>5</sup> Matheson, “Biography.”

*Be Still, My Soul* is an SATB, a cappella setting of the popular hymn tune “Finlandia.”

This piece is written in the key of F-Major and does not modulate. The beauty in this piece comes from the text, written by Katharina von Schlegel in 1752, the dynamic and rhythmic contrasts, and the dissonances and resolutions present throughout the piece. The text is as follows:

Be still, my soul: The Lord is on thy side;  
With patience bear thy cross of grief or pain.  
Leave to thy God to order and provide;  
In ev’ry change he faithful will remain.

Be still, my soul: The hour is hast’ning on;  
When we shall be forever with the Lord.  
When disappointment, grief and fear are gone.  
Sorrow forgot, love’s purest joys restored.

Be still, my soul: When change and tears are past,  
All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.  
Be still, my soul: The Lord is on thy side.  
Be still, my soul.

The piece begins with four measures of “oos” that firmly cement the tonality. The tenors are the first to add text over the texture of chordal oos, with the altos layering in next, followed by the sopranos and basses joining in to help create a definitive crescendo. A powerful moment follows as all parts come together to sing “leave to thy God to order and provide.” On the word “remain,” tenors have a 4-3 suspension that serves as the first of many dissonances and suspensions used throughout this piece. From this point on, all parts are singing together in completely homophonic chords as new text is introduced. In theory, this lack of textural diversity could lead to a rather bland piece. However, Matheson is very specific about the dynamics he desires, and these dynamic contrasts lend power to the piece. For example, a sudden change from a forte sound on “remain” to a mezzo-piano sound on the next “be still, my



soul” emulates the stillness and tranquility noted in the text. Matheson is much less specific in tempo markings, which lets the conductor interpret the text and employ tempo changes to convey this interpretation. For example, I employ a slight, almost imperceptible accelerando for the text “the hour is hast’ning on,” quickly returning to a-tempo for the next line of text. Matheson notates a ritard and a crescendo for the line “sorrow forgot, love’s purest joys restored.” In this moment, I choose not only to ritard and crescendo, but to broaden my gesture for a maestoso sound. This moment serves as the dynamic climax of the piece, as this line ends at a fortissimo dynamic. The following “be still my soul” is back to a-tempo and a mezzo-forte dynamic, and this contrast is quite stark. The final section of this piece is a layered repetition of “be still my soul” as the dynamic moves toward a piano ending. In this final section, the vocal parts divide and the harmonic texture becomes more dense. The divisi, dense harmonies are a perfect metaphor for the tensions and anxieties people often feel, even in stillness. The final three measures get quieter and more peaceful, and the final cadence being an authentic cadence brings a sense of resolution and stillness to the listener.

R. Nathaniel Dett (1882-1943) was one of the greatest musicians of African descent and one of the most important advocates for the performance and appreciation of works by black composers. From a young age, it was clear Dett was a gifted pianist. Dett became enamored with the tradition of spirituals early in his career. Dett was one of the first African-Americans to graduate from Oberlin College in 1908, earning degrees in both piano and composition. As a musician, Dett was known for his skillful fusion of African-American folk music and Romantic era European music. Among his most famous choral compositions are *Listen to the Lambs*, *Ave Maria*, and his oratorio *Ordering of Moses*. In addition to being an accomplished composer, performer, and professor of music, Dett was an accomplished poet and writer. Dett’s most

famous writings include his award-winning *The Emancipation of Negro Music* and his volume of poems *Album of the Heart*. Dett was recognized for his brilliance with honorary doctorates from Howard University and Oberlin. Today, Dett is recognized as an important African-American poet and one of the most important composers in American history. His study and preservation of the spiritual both lifted the genre to fame and allowed for future composers to expand the genre. During World War II, Dett joined the United Service Organization (USO) as a choral advisor to support US troops during the War. It was during one of these tours that Dett died of a heart attack on October 2, 1943. Dett's legacy lives on through the continued performance of his music to this day and the everlasting impacts he had on both music and literature during his life.<sup>6</sup>

Dett's setting of *America the Beautiful* (edited by Marques L.A. Garrett) is a unique interpretation of a core American song. Right away, Dett differentiates his setting in that he is not merely re-harmonizing or setting the familiar melody. Rather, Dett has written an entirely new melody and set the traditional text to this melody. Secondly, Dett sets a rather fast tempo. Most of the time, *America the Beautiful* is sung somewhere around 80-85 beats per minute. Dett has set a tempo of 100 beats per minute for his arrangement. This is essentially where the artistic direction from Dett ends. Given that this piece is completely homophonic, does not deviate from C Major, and has a hymn-like texture to it when reading it, it may be easy to simply sing this piece in the style of a hymn. However, given Dett's prowess for improvisation as a pianist, I believe that the sheet music here is merely a template. For performance, I have broken this piece up verse by verse. The first verse is to sound hymn-like, with all parts singing in harmony at a mezzo-forte dynamic. The second verse is to sound more legato and reserved, the dynamic is mezzo-piano and this verse is sung by sopranos on the melody and altos on the written alto line.

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<sup>6</sup> Nathaniel Dett, "About Nathaniel Dett" (2022), <https://nathanieldett.org/>.

The third verse is to mirror the second, only this time the tenors sing the melody and the basses sing the written bass part. The fourth verse begins at a piano dynamic. All choral voices sing on a soft “ooo” in harmony, while a soloist sings the line “O beautiful for patriot’s dream that sees beyond the years. Thine alabaster cities gleam undimmed by human tears.” The choir joins the soloist at a mezzo-forte dynamic on “America! America! God shed his grace on thee.” The piece then crescendos to a forte dynamic on the text “God shed His grace on thee” and remains at a forte for the remaining text “And crown thy good with brotherhood From sea to shining sea.”

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