

A Selection of Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo for SATB Choir:
Composition, Interpretation, and Recording of The Phoenix Chorale's

Northern Lights: Choral Music by Ola Gjeilo

by

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ABSTRACT

Norwegian composer Ola Gjeilo (b. 1978) is highly regarded as an accomplished and prolific composer of choral music. His creative output includes works for chorus, solo piano, and wind symphony. His unique style infuses elements of cinematic music, jazz and improvisation, with particularly intriguing selections of text. This study examines the factors that influence Gjeilo's compositional techniques, and the musical interpretations of conductor Charles Bruffy in his preparation for The Phoenix Chorale's recording *Northern Lights: Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo*. The eleven works discussed in this study are: *The Ground*, *Evening Prayer*, *Ubi caritas*, *Prelude*, *Northern Lights*, *The Spheres*, *Tota pulchra es*, *Serenity*, *Phoenix (Agnus Dei)*, *Unicornis captivatur*, and *Dark Night of the Soul*.

As a relatively new and young composer, there is very little published literature on Gjeilo and his works. This study provides an intimate glance into the creative process of the composer.

By composing in multiple styles and with a variety of inspirational sources, Gjeilo creates a fresh approach toward composition of new choral music. His style is revealed through interviews and numerous collaborations with conductors and performers who have prepared and performed his music, as well through an examination of the eleven works recorded by The Phoenix Chorale.

DEDICATION

To my parents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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¹ All figures are from Ola Gjeilo’s music recorded on The Phoenix Chorale’s *Northern Lights: Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo*. Walton Music Corporation.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

I first encountered Ola Gjeilo's choral music as a master's student at Arizona State University. A choral professor had chosen Gjeilo's *Prelude*, a short, exuberant piece of music, for an annual Arizona State University high school choral leadership workshop. *Prelude* was pleasantly accessible for students, presenting strong melodic motives, complex rhythm and harmonies, and significant dynamic variation, all composed in a simple ABA form. Its Latin text was simple, presented appropriately through its overall movement and motion. More importantly, I had a profound interest in the work's presentation of varying styles, from the composer's intended "joyful and celebratory starting and closing sections,"² to its more serene, chant-like middle. It seemed that this composer had a particular interest infusing multiple music styles into his works. Kira Rugen, a singer with The Phoenix Chorale, described Gjeilo's style:

At first listen, the music of Ola Gjeilo comes across as agreeable to the ear: simple, straightforward, easily evoking beautiful emotions. On the second or third listen, the complexity and multiple dimensions of his writing unfold. The density of the various compositional elements jumps out of the framework. Philosophically, Gjeilo seems to have a desire to create an atmosphere in which the listener can experience music that is direct and pleasing.³

I became more familiar with the music of Ola Gjeilo as a singing member with The Phoenix Chorale. An ensemble specializing in championing new choral works, The

² Ola Gjeilo, *Prelude*, Score. Composer's Comments.

³ Rugen, Kira. *About Ola Gjeilo's Sunrise: Symphonic Mass for Choir and String Orchestra*. Arizona State University, 2010, 2.

Phoenix Chorale and Artistic Director Charles Bruffy, sought out the young composer and provided him the opportunity to become the ensemble's first composer-in-residence.

Charles Bruffy and The Phoenix Chorale have subsequently recorded *Prelude*, and ten other works, in an album devoted entirely to the choral music of Ola Gjeilo entitled *Northern Lights: Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo*. Released on the international label, Chandos Records, the recording has received considerable acclaim, and was recognized by iTunes in 2012 as the Best Classical Vocal Album of the Year.⁴

Recently described as “a fresh voice in choral music—fast becoming one of the most performed composers of choral music,”⁵ Ola Gjeilo has earned a renowned national and international reputation in choral composing through ongoing collaboration with some of the world's top artists and choral organizations. His works have been performed in prestigious venues, such as New York City's Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, Los Angeles' Disney Hall, the Kennedy Center, National Gallery in Washington D.C., and Philadelphia's Kimmel Center. A distinguished keyboard and jazz improvisation enthusiast, he also continues to be an active performer. He has recorded and released personal piano albums with the multiple Grammy nominated label *2L*, featuring lyrical pieces in the crossroads between classical, jazz, and popular music.

⁴ iTunes is an online application through ©Apple Inc., which organizes, plays, and sells digital music and videos.

⁵ Tom Porter, “Something Old, Something New,” *Melisma: Official Publication of the North Central Division (ACDA)* 30, no. 1 (Fall/Winter, 2010): 12.

Need and Purpose for the Study

Since Gjeilo is a relatively younger composer, there is little published literature or information regarding his choral music. Other than brief interviews, performance reviews, and the occasional standard biographical reference works, only minimal substantive references in choral magazines, newspapers, and journal entries, have appeared since the introduction of his choral music. Most of the resources provided are adequate in becoming familiar with the composer, however they do not touch upon his creative process and influences. Only rarely do they discuss his compositional techniques and the personal inspirations as heard in his works.

One of the most valuable resources for performers and conductors is the ability to access research on living composers. Such accessibility and research can yield helpful insight into the interpretation, understanding, and intentions in a work, which can vary significantly in the absence of the composer.

The positive response and reaction from audiences around the world toward Gjeilo's choral music have been clearly established.⁶ Although his music continues to be performed and enthusiastically received from ensembles, conductors, performers, and audiences, the significant lack of resources justifies a study of his compositions.

Procedures

There were many factors taken into consideration while preparing an investigation into the choral music of Ola Gjeilo. This project provides a brief biography of Ola Gjeilo,

⁶ I have been involved in numerous performances of Gjeilo's music with The Phoenix Chorale and have witnessed the positive responses of audiences.

followed by information on The Phoenix Chorale. It examines the compositional approach in the eleven selected works of the composer recorded by The Phoenix Chorale in *Northern Lights: Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo*. Additionally, it includes conductor Charles Bruffy's interpretations and insights, and his techniques used in preparation for the recording. Lastly, a comprehensive catalogue of Gjeilo's published choral works to date is included.

I. Biography

The purpose of this study is to enhance the existing biography, with new information about Gjeilo's family life, early influences and their roles in the development of his career. All information was obtained through correspondence with the composer via interviews, performances, recording projects, and phone conversations. From this information, we are able to explore the influences which helped shape Gjeilo's various viewpoints, text choices, and compositional styles heard throughout his works.

II. Discussion of Repertoire

Of the choral works by Ola Gjeilo, eleven pieces that were part of the May 2010 recording project by The Phoenix Chorale are included in this document. The project, in which I was active, required significant collaboration between composer, conductor, and ensemble. To showcase a broad range of influences and styles in composing, Charles Bruffy and Joel Rinsema, selected repertoire from Gjeilo's earliest to most recent

compositions.⁷ *Ubi caritas* (2001), *Tota pulchra es* (2001), *Prelude* (2004), and *Unicornis captivatur* (2001), are among his earliest composed works. The remaining seven, *The Ground* (2010), *Serenity* (2010), *Northern Lights* (2008), *Dark Night of the Soul* (2010), *The Spheres* (2008), *Phoenix (Agnus Dei)* (2008), and *Evening Prayer* (2010) are among his more recent compositions. *The Ground*, *Serenity*, *Northern Lights*, *Dark Night of the Soul*, and *Evening Prayer* are premiere recordings.

Ensemble type and the division of voice parts throughout these works are clearly specified in each piece. Many works require *divisi* in one or more voices. When Gjeilo does not require the use of SSAATTBB (the division of soprano, alto, tenor, and bass sections), both voices from each section will sing the same line. *Prelude*, *Ubi caritas*, and *Northern Lights* do not require full *divisi* voicing. Gjeilo has also arranged *Ubi caritas* for women's chorus (SSAA), and men's chorus (TTBB). The discussed works are arranged in this paper by level of difficulty, from easiest to the most advanced.⁸

Of the eleven selected choral pieces highlighted in this document, four are composed for accompanied chorus: *Dark Night of the Soul*, *Evening Prayer*, *The Ground*, and *Serenity*. In these works, the composer places strong emphasis on the keyboard. He also utilizes a string quartet in *Dark Night of the Soul* and *The Ground*, a solo cello in *Serenity*, and a tenor saxophone in *Evening Prayer*. The remaining seven

⁷ Joel Rinsema is the Executive Director and assistant conductor of The Phoenix Chorale.

⁸ The level of difficulty for each work was determined by my personal experiences preparing, performing, and conducting the composer's music. I also refer to suggestions from JWPepper & Son®, Inc., an online music supplier, who provides level ratings of the music.

works are *a cappella*. The majority of Gjeilo's compositions recorded on The Phoenix Chorale's album are less than ten minutes in duration. One work, however, *Dark Night of the Soul*, is a larger multi-section work.

Gjeilo has been inspired and influenced by sacred literature, setting these texts in a vast majority of his earlier works, including those selected by The Phoenix Chorale. These works use text from the Latin mass, biblical texts of the Old and New Testaments, and sacred and mystical poetry. Although the meaning of the text is often the principal driving force of a choral work, Gjeilo often utilizes a text for its "singability or comfortable vowels,"⁹ so that its meaning is not the "focus or drive" of the work.¹⁰

During Ola Gjeilo's compositional process, the music is often influenced and further materialized through the aesthetics of his surroundings. Gjeilo explains, "I often record my musical ideas and listen to them further in an outside element—throughout the city or its parks. If the music corresponds with the beauty of the surroundings, it's a sign that the music might be on the right path."¹¹ Lastly, his profound interest in jazz, film music, and improvisation continues to play a significant role in the development of his compositions.

With each accompanied work, a specific approach is taken toward the roles of the voices and instruments. In place of the traditional instrumental accompaniment, Gjeilo

⁹ Ola Gjeilo, interview by Ryan Garrison, Phoenix, AZ, 17 February 2013.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Gjeilo, interview, 21 March 2013.

occasionally reverses the role of performing forces by having the voices play the “accompanying” role through the use of “neutral vowel” within the vocal line.

Performance notes on the eleven works are provided to assist and alert the choral director and ensemble of possible challenges in preparing and performing Gjeilo’s music. Both Gjeilo and Charles Bruffy, the conductor of The Phoenix Chorale, have provided suggestions as a result of their experiences in making and performing the music on *Northern Lights: Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo*.

Appendices

The first Appendix is provided at the conclusion of the paper, which catalogues all of Gjeilo’s choral works to date, including titles, publishers, dates of publication and publication numbers, source of text and language, style of work (accompanied/unaccompanied), instruments utilized, duration of work, possible programming type, appropriate level of work, and voicing. The second Appendix shows the permission granted by Walton Music Corporation and Ola Gjeilo, to use the music excerpts included in this paper.

CHAPTER TWO
COMPOSER OLA GJEILO: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY
AND WORK WITH THE PHOENIX CHORALE

Background, Perspectives and Influences

Born in Skui, Norway,¹² Ola Gjeilo has been surrounded by musical influences his entire life. Although he is not from a predominant musical family, Gjeilo was continually exposed to the arts and received encouragement to pursue music. His father, an amateur jazz musician and enthusiast, played the trombone and saxophone, and later provided Gjeilo with “more insight on the spiritual aspect of composition.”¹³ His grandmother gave the Gjeilo family a piano, and the composer began playing and improvising small tunes around the age of four. His parents were lovers of choral music and frequently played recordings of Christmas albums by King’s College, Cambridge and Sir David Willcocks. Gjeilo particularly enjoyed listening to Handel’s choral works, J.S. Bach’s *B-Minor Mass* and Brahms’s *Ein deutsches Requiem*, as well as operas and British choral music.¹⁴

Although Gjeilo did not learn to read music until the age of seven, he had “good ears” and was able to retain what he heard. “I had been improvising since I was very young. I was pretty rebellious about learning to read music for a long time; I just wanted

¹² Ola Gjeilo, interview by Ryan Garrison, Phoenix, AZ, 25 January 2013.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Gjeilo, interview, 21 March 2013.

to play my own music or to learn music by ear. I'm really happy about that now, although I exhausted quite a few teachers."¹⁵ While attending a high school in Norway specifically focused on the development of young musicians,¹⁶ Gjeilo received training in chord analysis and history. Additionally, he received guidance on the synthesizer by Leif Bratterud, whom he described as "a great teacher."¹⁷ Gjeilo soon became interested in studying and playing jazz.

Ola Gjeilo's styles have long been influenced by sacred church music. He sang Maurice Duruflé's *Ubi caritas* with his high school choir and following this profound experience, began studying *a cappella* choral works. Wolfgang Plagge, a pianist and composer of church music, was Gjeilo's first composition teacher. Plagge provided further influence, guidance, and exposure in this style of composition.¹⁸

In the 1990's, many music institutions sought "somewhat edgy or avant-garde" compositions.¹⁹ Although these schools did not consider Gjeilo's works to be particularly radical, he was able to easily find educational opportunities beyond high school. In 1998, the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester accepted him as a pupil. Living close to beautiful locations in England played a significant role in the

¹⁵ Ola Gjeilo, interview, 25 January 2013.

¹⁶ It is common in Norway to attend high schools that focus on specific fields of study, such as piano tuning and lumbering, along with general education.

¹⁷ Gjeilo, interview, 2013.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

initial stages of his compositional process. However, Gjeilo was not yet ready for the college experience.

After having been accepted to the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo, Gjeilo returned to Norway in 1999, where his main interest was composition. He continued to study church music for a more craft-based compositional education. It was during this tenure that Gjeilo became particularly interested in choral music.

Inspired by his love for New York City, Gjeilo moved to the United States in 2001 to attend The Juilliard School of Music. The compositions of the Juilliard faculty particularly influenced and inspired Gjeilo as he pursued an American education.

While at Juilliard, Gjeilo became more familiar with American composers and their choral music. Works by Eric Whitacre (b. 1970), Morten Lauridsen's (b. 1943) *Lux Aeterna*, and *Voyage* by John Corigliano (b. 1938), a Juilliard professor, were all American composers and works that provided early choral exposure. Additionally, professional choral recordings by The Phoenix Chorale, The Kansas City Chorale,²⁰ and Dale Warland Singers provided further exposure for the composer. He completed a Master's Degree in Composition from the Juilliard School in 2006.

As a jazz and improvisation enthusiast, Gjeilo enjoys "bringing images alive through music."²¹ His love for the combination of music and image as well as his belief in the "art of film and its ability to immerse oneself in deep expression" sparked his

²⁰ The Kansas City Chorale, under the direction of Charles Bruffy, is the sister choir to The Phoenix Chorale.

²¹ Gjeilo, interview, 2013.

interest toward film and cinematic composers.²² Film composers that inspired Gjeilo are Thomas Newman (b. 1955), Howard Shore (b. 1946), John Williams (b. 1932), Alan Silvestri (b. 1950), Dario Marianelli (b. 1963), and James Newton Howard (b. 1951). Gjeilo has also been profoundly influenced through the music of jazz composer and improviser, Keith Jarrett (b. 1945). Ola Gjeilo explains:

His solo concerts, the music for the Scandinavian Quartet and the trio-work with DeJohnette and Peacock—his contribution has been immense; his way of playing just the right notes, nothing more, nothing less. He never uses his formidable technique to impress or provoke, but always to express as honestly as possible what is in him and around him at any given moment. You can feel that he is in love with the piano and with the music that flows through him.²³

Seeking further exposure to cinematic music, Gjeilo relocated to Los Angeles, California, where he was accepted to attend The University of Southern California from 2006-2007.

In 2012, Gjeilo was selected to be the composer-in-residence for the New York City-based professional choir, Manhattan Concert Chorale. In 2009-2010, the professional choral ensemble The Phoenix Chorale, selected Gjeilo to be its first composer-in-residence. During this residency, Gjeilo composed several new works, including *Dark Night of the Soul*, and all pieces were given premiere performances by the ensemble.

While at the Juilliard School, Gjeilo spent time in the recording studio improvising on the piano and laying down the initial groundwork for his instrumental CD, *Stone Rose*, which was released in 2007. In 2012, he released a sequel recording

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

entitled *Piano Improvisations*. This release showcases Gjeilo's love for spontaneity and improvisation, featuring fantasies based on his three choral works, *Ubi caritas, Tota pulchra es*, and *Prelude*. He also released two singles, *Shades of Violet*, and *Departures*, which represent his love for cinematic music, as well as Electronica, ambient, and jazz. All works are available through iTunes, Spotify,²⁴ and Amazon.²⁵

Ola Gjeilo returned to New York City in 2013, and continues to receive commissions and perform with collegiate and professional ensembles throughout the United States and Europe. His music is published in the United States through Walton Music, publisher of his choral works since 2007, and Edition Peters.

The Phoenix Chorale and *Northern Lights: Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo*

Arizona's professional choral ensemble, The Phoenix Chorale, is a twenty eight-voice chorus in residence at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in downtown Phoenix. The ensemble was founded in 1958. Formerly known as both The Phoenix Bach and Madrigal Society and The Phoenix Bach Choir, the group has performed across the United States and Canada under artistic directors Millicent Wesley,²⁶ Wallace Hornibrook (b. 1925, d. 2002), Dan Durand, Vance George (b. 1933), Anders Öhrwall

²⁴ Spotify provides commercial music streaming of major and independent record labels.

²⁵ Amazon.com, Inc., is an online source that provides access to music, CDs, and MP3 downloads, among other amenities.

²⁶ Millicent Wesley was the first conductor of The Phoenix Bach and Madrigal Society, a small study group focused on the music of the Renaissance and Baroque periods.

(b.1932, d. 2012), Jon Washburn (b. 1942),²⁷ and since 1998, Charles Bruffy (b. 1958). In 2009, the choir made its New York City debut at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall.

The Phoenix Chorale has made numerous recordings, both solo and in conjunction with The Kansas City Chorale. As The Phoenix Bach Choir, the ensemble released its debut recording, *Southwest Christmas*, under the direction of Jon Washburn. In 2004, under Artistic Director Charles Bruffy, The Phoenix Chorale became the first North American ensemble to release an album with Chandos Records,²⁸ *Shakespeare in Song*. Since then, The Phoenix Chorale has released three joint recordings with The Kansas City Chorale, *Grechaninov: Passion Week*,²⁹ *Eternal Rest*, and *Rheinberger: Sacred Choral Works*,³⁰ and one solo recording *Spotless Rose: Hymns to the Virgin Mary*.³¹

²⁷ Jon Washburn is currently the Conductor and Artistic Director of the professional vocal ensemble, The Vancouver Chamber Choir.

²⁸ Chandos Records is one of the largest independent classical record labels in the world.

²⁹ *Grechaninov: Passion Week* was acknowledged by The National Academy of Recording Artists in February 2008, with a Technical Grammy award for 'Best Engineered Album.' It was also nominated the same year for 'Best Classical Album,' 'Best Surround Sound,' and 'Best Choral Performance.'

³⁰ *Rheinberger: Sacred Choral Works* was acknowledged by The National Academy of Recording Artists in February 2009 with a nomination for 'Best Choral Performance,' and 'Best Surround Sound.'

³¹ *Spotless Rose: Hymns to the Virgin Mary* was acknowledged by The National Academy of Recording Artists in February 2009 with a Performance Grammy award for 'Best Small Ensemble Performance.' It was also nominated the same year for 'Best Classical Album.'

In January 2011, The Phoenix Chorale began preparation to record a subsequent solo project, *Northern Lights: Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo*, a disc entirely dedicated to the choral works of the Norwegian composer. With assistance from the composer at the piano, the project was completed in May 2011 at Camelback Bible Church in Paradise Valley, Arizona. The recording also features The Harrington String Quartet, cellist, Emmanuel Lopez, and tenor saxophonist, Ted Belledin.³² The project was overseen by Ralph Couzens, Executive Producer of Chandos Records, and was produced and engineered by Sound/Mirror from Boston.³³

³² Emmanuel Lopez is the cellist with The Harrington String Quartet.

³³ Blanton Alspaugh was the Producer and John Newton and Beyond Joon Hwang were the Sound Engineers from Sound/Mirror.

CHAPTER THREE

COMPOSITION OF SELECTED WORKS

NORTHERN LIGHTS: CHORAL WORKS BY OLA GJEILO:

The success of a choral ensemble depends to a great extent on the conductor's selection of level-appropriate repertoire. This can often be a daunting task for the conductor. Although basic considerations, such as providing music on a particular theme or for a specific occasion is important, the choral conductor should first consider repertoire that fits the needs and interests of the particular age group and level of his choir. This includes the consideration of vocal ranges, preferred vocal style, adequate number of voices required to cover parts, and the physical limitations of the singers. The selection of repertoire should continue to energize, motivate, inspire, and provide growth for the individual voice within the ensemble.

This chapter, arranged by level of difficulty, presents a discussion of each work heard on the recording. The order was determined with consideration to the elements mentioned in the previous paragraph.³⁴ The discussion identifies challenging elements and similarities to assist the choral conductor and ensemble in preparing Gjeilo's music. *The Ground, Evening Prayer, Ubi caritas, and Prelude* are among Gjeilo's more accessible compositions.³⁵ Works of moderate difficulty include *Northern Lights, The*

³⁴ The order was also determined through my experience preparing, performing, and conducting each work.

³⁵ These works are appropriate for high school, community, and church choral ensembles.

*Spheres, Tota pulchra es, and Serenity.*³⁶ *Phoenix (Agnus Dei), Unicornis captivatur,* and *Dark Night of the Soul* are some of Gjeilo's more advanced works.³⁷

Many similar characteristics appear throughout Gjeilo's compositions that should be considered before programming. These similarities are identified prior to the discussion of each work,³⁸ and any distinctive characteristics are discussed in the additional performance notes.

The Ground, Evening Prayer, Ubi caritas, and Prelude are composed with smaller vocal ranges, which are appropriate for younger and less experienced ensembles. Gjeilo's more advanced compositions, *Phoenix (Agnus Dei), Unicornis captivatur,* and *Dark Night of the Soul* utilize larger ranges and may not fit the physical limitations of younger singers. The tessitura in these works is wide, and large intervals between notes in the voice parts might prove difficult to execute. The more advanced works, including *Prelude*, also feature complex rhythmic passages. The best approach to learning these passages is through continued repetition in the rehearsal.

Ongoing repetition in the choral rehearsal will also be beneficial in dealing with the challenges of Gjeilo's frequent key transitions. *Ubi caritas, Tota pulchra es, Phoenix*

³⁶ These works are appropriate for advanced high school, community, church, and collegiate choral ensembles.

³⁷ These works are more appropriate for advanced high school, collegiate, and professional choral ensembles.

³⁸ The similarities include consideration of *divisi*, vocal ranges and technique, complex rhythm and meters, modulations, and the instrumental forces required in each work.

(Agnus Dei), *Unicornis captivatur*, and *Dark Night of the Soul* are works that present significant modulations.

Given Gjeilo's use of full *divisi*, the conductor should consider the quality of voices as well as the quantity of voices to utilize in a work. As larger ensembles present challenges with blend, a smaller ensemble may seem ideal. However, a smaller ensemble would require more independently trained singers to cover the numerous parts. This should be considered before programming *The Spheres*, *Tota pulchra es*, *Serenity*, and *Phoenix (Agnus Dei)*. Although *Dark Night of the Soul* and *Unicornis captivatur* are composed with significant *divisi*, less emphasis is placed on utilizing minimal vibrato, making the works appropriate for advanced smaller and larger ensembles.

In a majority of Gjeilo's works, the use of vibrato should be utilized only to provide additional color in the sound. Heavy or uncontrolled vibrato can cause problems with intonation in *Ubi caritas*, *Prelude*, *Northern Lights*, *The Spheres*, *Serenity*, and *Phoenix (Agnus Dei)*. The use of minimal vibrato is essential in *The Spheres* and *Serenity*, because of the work's sustained vocal passages. In *Ubi caritas* and *Prelude*, however, the narrow ranges allow the choral director an opportunity to introduce this vocal style in a healthy approach.³⁹

Gjeilo highlights the role of the instruments in *The Ground*, *Evening Prayer*, *Serenity* and *Dark Night of the Soul*. *Evening Prayer* and *Dark Night of the Soul* require a strong presence from the keyboard. Although the string quartet is not required to perform *The Ground*, it is required in *Dark Night of the Soul*. The cello and tenor

³⁹ This vocal style includes the introduction to straight tone singing, which I refer to as the use of minimal vibrato in this paper.

saxophone solos in *Serenity* and *Evening Prayer* are especially unique to Gjeilo's composition, and should be strongly considered before programming.

ACCESSIBLE WORKS

The Ground

<i>Pleni sunt caeli et terra Gloria tua. Hosanna in excelsis.</i>	Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.
<i>Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini. Hosanna in excelsis.</i>	Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in excelsis.
<i>Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.</i>	Lamb of God, who takest away the sin of the world, have mercy on us.
<i>Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.</i>	Lamb of God, who takest away the sin of the world, have mercy on us.
<i>Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem.</i>	Lamb of God, who takest away the sin of the world, grant us peace. ⁴⁰

The Ground, an independent work based on a part of the final movement of Gjeilo's *Sunrise Mass for Choir and String Orchestra*, is one of two extracted works from the mass, which may be performed as an isolated piece. *The Ground* was commissioned and arranged for the Desert Vista High School Choir (Phoenix, Arizona) and its director, Andrew DeValk, for SATB *divisi* chorus, piano, and optional string quartet.

⁴⁰ Jeffers, Ron. *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire*. Vol. 1, *Sacred Latin Texts* (Corvallis: Earthsongs, 1988), 54-56.

Text

As the final movement in Gjeilo's *Sunrise Mass for Choir and String Orchestra*, *The Ground* utilizes text from the Sanctus (*Pleni sunt caeli*) and Agnus Dei. Although Gjeilo observes traditions expected of the mass by setting the meaning of the Latin text appropriately, the English title reflects the musical evolution of the larger *Sunrise Mass*. Prior to *The Ground*, the *Sunrise Mass* depicts a journey of music through the heavens to the earth, where the work arrives at a grounded sense of peace and tranquility.⁴¹ Gjeilo provides the title to “convey a sense of having ‘arrived’ at the end of the Mass and to having reached a kind of peace and grounded strength.”⁴²

A Brief Description of the Music of *The Ground*

The music in *The Ground* demonstrates Gjeilo's ability to compose with various influences and interests. In maintaining his symphonic approach in composing, the instruments play a significant role in *The Ground*. The voices are utilized as accompaniment to the piano in the introduction and conclusion, and in various instrumental bridges (Fig. 1).

⁴¹ Rugen, Kira. *About Ola Gjeilo's Sunrise: Symphonic Mass for Choir and String Orchestra*. Arizona State University, 2010, 2.

⁴² Parke, Kathryn. *Northern Lights; Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo*, ed. Finn S. Gundersen (Colchester, Essex C02 8HX, England: Chandos Records Ltd, 2012), 7.

76

Soprano *p*
Mmm

Alto *p*
Mmm

Tenor *p*
Mmm

Bass *p*
Mmm

Piano *mp*

76

Apply sustain pedal liberally

Fig.1—“Piano with Voice Accompaniment,” mm. 1-5; *The Ground*
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Presented in three sections with an added conclusion,⁴³ this simple homophonic work concludes the *Sunrise Mass*, with what Gjeilo refers to as a “Chorale” that honors the composer J.S. Bach.⁴⁴ The melodic and cinematic-influenced motive is placed in the soprano (Fig. 2), where the rhythmic structure remains simple. As one of his favorite compositional devices, Gjeilo creates “a bed of warm and evocative sound,”⁴⁵ by doubling the voices with the string quartet.

⁴³ The conclusion is not in the original *Sunrise Mass*.

⁴⁴ Ola Gjeilo, interview by Ryan Garrison, Phoenix, AZ, 17 February 2013.

⁴⁵ Parke, 7.

Chorale

Ple - ni sunt cae - li et ter - ra glo - ri - a tu - a.

Fig 2—“Melodic and Lyrical Soprano Motive,” mm. 1-4; *The Ground*
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The melody of the chorale is presented three times in the work, each ascending in key by a major third: the first in G major; the second to B major; and the final to E-flat major. With each ascending modulation and statement, Gjeilo adds more *divisi* and dynamic variation. The final statement at m. 51 is the most symphonic, featuring all voices and instruments playing *fortissimo* (Fig. 3).

B a tempo

51 *ff* nus - De - i, qui tol - lis pec - ca -

ff Ag - nus De - i, tol - lis pec -

ff Ag - nus De - i, tol - lis pec -

ff Ag - nus De - i, tol - lis pec -

51 a tempo *ff*

Fig. 3—“Final Chorale” mm. 51-54; *The Ground*
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In the *Sunrise Mass*, the movement originally concluded following the final stanza. Later, Gjeilo composed a separate, gentle conclusion for the arrangement by adding the *Dona nobis pacem* text. Influenced by Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*,⁴⁶ this concluding segment resolves with voices descending through a series of prolonged *decrescendo* and sustained notes. The piano brings the work to an end with an ascending cadence in E-flat major.

Additional Performance Notes

The Ground is a highly accessible work for a multitude of choral ensembles. Although the soprano line has notes in the upper register in the final stanza (mm. 51-54), the full accompaniment doubled by the string quartet, *divisi*, and dynamics allow the singers to comfortably utilize their full voices. Although the ranges for alto, tenor, and bass voices are accessible, a concluding low E-flat₂ in the lower bass (*divisi*) may be challenging for younger basses.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Gjeilo, interview, 17 February 2013.

⁴⁷ Scientific pitch is utilized to identify range throughout this paper. C₄ is middle C.

Evening Prayer

Watch, O Lord, with those who wake,
or watch, or weep tonight,
and give your angels charge
over those who sleep.

Tend your sick ones, O Lord Christ.
Rest your weary ones.
Bless your dying ones.
Soothe your suffering ones.
Pity your afflicted ones.
Shield your joyous ones.
And all for your love's sake.

Amen.⁴⁸

As the final work composed for The Phoenix Chorale by Gjeilo as composer-in-residence, *Evening Prayer* presents a “crossover and blend of interests” with its infusion of jazz, improvisation, and hint of classical styles.⁴⁹ Extremely uncommon in choral literature, the work features a largely improvised accompaniment in the piano and tenor saxophone, utilizing only chord symbols typically seen in jazz charts as the only guide throughout.⁵⁰ *Evening Prayer* was commissioned by Donna Corcoran in memory of Richard Kiraly, and received its premiere in Phoenix, Arizona by The Phoenix Chorale in 2010.

⁴⁸ An accurate source for this text is not found. Some sources (www.goodreads.com) directly credit this text to St. Augustine but do not provide a reference to historical background or English translation. Most sources (www.catholic.org, www.precelatinae.org, and www.cptryon.com) only attribute the text to St. Augustine.

⁴⁹ Ola Gjeilo, interview by Ryan Garrison, Phoenix, AZ, 19 February 2013.

⁵⁰ At the time of recording, *Evening Prayer* was not a published work, and was accompanied by the composer and tenor saxophonist, Ted Belledin, for performance by The Phoenix Chorale. When the work is published, the composer intends to notate the accompaniment.

Text

The text was provided by Ms. Corcoran, and utilizes what is widely thought to be the composition of St. Augustine of Hippo. As one of the most influential thinkers in the history of the Catholic Church and author of *Confessions*, *On Christian Doctrine*, and *On the Trinity*, St. Augustine was known to have composed over one hundred texts and prayers in his lifetime.⁵¹ Although the original Latin text does not provide a source, many written prayers similar to the text of *Evening Prayer* have been attributed to St. Augustine.

A Brief Description of the Music of *Evening Prayer*

Gjeilo scores *Evening Prayer* for SATB *divisi* chorus, with an infusion of jazz and improvisation in the piano and tenor saxophone. This free form work begins with a simple, brief, yet expressive unaccompanied tenor saxophone solo. Gjeilo provides notation for this opening solo.

In an improvised style, the piano freely enters in m. 5, complimenting the melodic warmth provided in the tenor saxophone. Although no particular key is established throughout the opening passage, the first theme at m. 9 in the tenor saxophone (also heard at m. 29 in the unified male voices) briefly suggests A major. As the tenor saxophone concludes on the sustained tonic of A major, the piano takes more leadership in the conclusion of the introduction. Following four measures of completely improvised piano, the tenor saxophone re-enters with the piano at m. 25, as Gjeilo utilizes chord

⁵¹ Bourke, Vernon J. *Augustine's Love of Wisdom: An Introspective Philosophy* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1992).

identification as the sole musical guide for the instruments (Fig. 4). This chord identification further suggests the beginning in A major.



Fig. 4—“Chord Identification,” mm. 25-28; *Evening Prayer*
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The voices enter at m. 29, with the men in unison taking over the initial theme heard from the tenor saxophone in the introduction. With the piano part completely improvised—no chord identification originally provided until m. 47—the composer allows for a free and expressive introduction of the text (Fig. 5). Furthermore, the unified male voices uniquely match the opening mellow tone and color of the tenor saxophone.



Fig. 5—“Use of Unison in Male Voices,” mm. 29-36; *Evening Prayer*
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An eight-measure, improvised bridge follows the men’s introduction of the text at m. 47, where Gjeilo provides further chord identification to guide both the piano and

tenor saxophone. A modulation to neighboring F# minor occurs at m. 55, with the text “Tend your sick ones, O Lord Jesus Christ.” The melody continues to be carried by the bass voice and doubled in the tenor saxophone—which is here notated—as Gjeilo again utilizes the remaining voices (SAT) in an accompanying role to the text and instruments. This theme, presented in both major and minor, appears several times throughout the work, in both instruments and voices.

All voices enter harmonically on text at m. 71. As Gjeilo composes an ascent to climax through numerous keys, he utilizes patterns of chords IV—V, to reach the next minor key. From mm. 71-79, Gjeilo transitions through A minor—F major—G major, before arriving to the next section of text in C minor (Fig. 6).

The image displays two systems of musical notation for vocal parts. The first system shows a Soprano line (treble clef) and a Bass line (bass clef). The Soprano line has lyrics: "shield your joy - ous ones; and". The Bass line has lyrics: "ones; joy - ous ones; and". Both lines start with a dynamic marking of *f*. The second system continues the vocal lines. The Soprano line has lyrics: "all for your love's sake. Shield". The Bass line has lyrics: "all for your love's sake. Shield". Both lines end with a dynamic marking of *ff*.

Fig. 6—“Pattern of Chord Transitions,” mm. 71-79; *Evening Prayer* Reprinted with permission from the composer.

Transitioning to A minor at m. 94, the tenor saxophone and piano continue to be completely improvised, with guidance through minimal chord identification. As heard in many of Gjeilo’s later works with instruments, the voices enter on a neutral syllable at m. 98, in an accompanying role. A similar harmonic progression, as mentioned above,

occurs from mm. 94-142 through an array of dynamic changes. It reaches *fortissimo* as the work achieves its climactic moment in m. 143.

The initial conclusion begins at the climax at m. 143, where the soprano and tenor voices carry the theme in C major. Rather than having the work *decrecendo* toward the conclusion, Gjeilo maintains intensity within all performing forces. He re-emphasizes the text through unison voices doubled by piano, variation in dynamics, and an expressively improvised solo in the tenor saxophone. Although the rhythmic structure and meter throughout the work are simple, brief syncopation occurs in the voices concluding 'Amen.' The voices accompany the piano movement into the final measures with a concluding *decrecendo*.

Additional Performance Notes

Ola Gjeilo's *Evening Prayer* presents a fresh alternative to traditional standard choral repertoire. Although the voices are vital in presenting the text, the improvised jazz influence on the piano and tenor saxophone should maintain the uniqueness of the work.

Particular attention should be given to clarity in diction and expressivity in phrasing. Dynamics within the vocal lines are important to both achieving a successful climactic point in the work, and to accompanying the improvised piano and tenor saxophone within the instrumental bridges.

Ubi caritas

<i>Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est. Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor.</i>	Where there is charity and love, God is there.
<i>Exsultemus et in ipso jucundemur. Timeamus et amemus Deum vivum</i>	The love of Christ has gathered us together Let us revere and love the living God.
<i>Et ex corde diligamus nos sincero.</i>	And from a sincere heart let us love on another.
<i>Amen.</i>	Amen. ⁵²

One of his earliest composed choral works (2001), Gjeilo considers *Ubi caritas* to be one of his most performed and popular pieces to date.⁵³ Originally composed for SATB *a cappella* chorus,⁵⁴ Gjeilo has also arranged the work for Men's (TTBB), and Women's (SSAA) chorus. The work is dedicated to Lone Larsen, conductor of the Swedish professional choir, Voces Nordicae, which performed the North American premiere of *Ubi caritas*, at the 2007 American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) National Conference in Miami, Florida.

Text, Form, and Meter

Similar to *Tota pulchra es*, the text from the first of Durufle's *Four Gregorian Motets*, had a significant influence on the composer. Related to the Eucharist, the text

⁵² Jeffers, Ron. *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire*. Vol. 1, *Sacred Latin Texts* (Corvallis: Earthsongs, 1988), 229.

⁵³ Ola Gjeilo, *Ubi caritas*, Score. Composer's Comments.

⁵⁴ *Ubi caritas* has minimal *divisi*, written briefly in the soprano voice.

‘Ubi caritas,’ is widely known as the antiphon for the first communion and the washing of the feet from the Mass for Maundy Thursday.

Although it may appear that *Ubi caritas* is presented in four parts, the work is arguably presented in three sections, which are closer to ABA form.⁵⁵ As the opening and closing sections emulate one another,⁵⁶ the middle section is significantly longer, complex, and more contrasting.

Gjeilo maintains a simple meter throughout the entire work. Occasionally, meter changes are used to lengthen or shorten phrases, appropriately adhering to the prosody of text.

A Brief Description of the Music of *Ubi caritas*

The beginning of *Ubi caritas* opens with a flowing chant-like solo in the soprano voice (Fig. 7). Although this “composition is entirely original and is not based on any existing chants,”⁵⁷ the motive is reflective of the Gregorian chant tradition, which pays “homage to the text’s ancient history.”⁵⁸ Gjeilo intentionally places the conclusion of the solo chant in the alto voice to provide variation of color and timbre to echo the soprano

⁵⁵ The contrasting material in mm. 28-32 is too brief to be a separate “C” section, and is best identified as a bridge. The initial conclusion of text followed by a repeat of the opening text in the final section strengthens this argument.

⁵⁶ With the exception of stretching the concluding phrases (metrically) and an addition of a three-measure ‘amen’ coda/conclusion, the opening and closing material is nearly identical.

⁵⁷ Ola Gjeilo, *Ubi caritas*, Score. Composer’s Comments.

⁵⁸ Parke, 7.

motive. Both voices conclude the opening text in unison. These chant-like sequences solidify the opening section key in F-sharp minor.



Fig. 7—“Opening Melodic ‘Chant’,” mm. 1-4; *Ubi caritas*
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The chant sequence presented in the opening is repeated with all voices in unison at m. 8. Rather than concluding the phrase in unison, however, Gjeilo provides harmony and brief tension through dissonance.⁵⁹ The opening chant sequence in the alto is also repeated by all voices in unison at mm. 12-13, concluding with similar harmonic movement before arriving on a perfect cadence in F-sharp minor. This cadence brings the opening section to an end.

The contrasting middle section begins following a modulation to A major. Gjeilo creates an exuberant and joyful approach to the new text through full harmony, accelerating tempo, and expressive dynamics.⁶⁰ The section ascends to climax in m. 22, with the work’s only written *fortissimo*. As the soprano continues to carry the motive, Gjeilo composes two brief measures of *divisi* in the soprano, with the lower voice simply sustaining the tonic. A *diminuendo* leading to a delayed resolution (suspension in tenor)

⁵⁹ Brief tension through dissonance occurs with the use of a VI chord with an added seventh, leading to a VII chord with an added ninth. This also occurs with the conclusion of the opening section at m. 15.

⁶⁰ A *mezzo forte* begins the middle section, followed by the composer’s instructions to *crescendo poco a poco* toward the work’s climactic *fortissimo*.

marks the conclusion of the climax and textual phrase (Fig. 8). Gjeilo composes these delayed resolutions numerous times throughout the work to conclude phrases.

The image shows a musical score for four voices: Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor (T.), and Bass (B.). The music is in B major, indicated by two sharps (F# and C#) in the key signature. The measure number 27 is written above the Soprano staff. The lyrics 'vi - vum.' are written below each staff. The Soprano and Alto parts have a quarter note followed by a quarter rest. The Tenor part has a half note followed by a quarter rest. The Bass part has a half note followed by a quarter rest. The Tenor part shows a delayed resolution from a suspension in the previous measure to A-sharp in this measure.

Fig. 8—“Delayed Resolution,” m. 27; *Ubi caritas*
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Gjeilo modulates to B major for the final four-measures of the middle section. This modulation occurs through the resolution of the tenor suspension to A-sharp in the previous measure. These four-measures present the remaining text of the antiphon. Again, Gjeilo places emphasis on decelerating tempo and the use of expressive dynamics (*mezzo forte*, *mezzo piano*, *crescendo*, *decrescendo*), adhering to the serene intentions of the text. The bridge and text cadence through use of another delayed resolution provided from the alto voice (Fig. 9).

The image shows a musical score for four voices: Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor (T.), and Bass (B.). The music is in F# major (two sharps) and begins at measure 31. The lyrics for all voices are "nos sin-ce - ro." The Soprano part starts with a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5, then a dotted half note G4. The Alto part starts with a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5, then a dotted half note G4. The Tenor part starts with a quarter note G3, followed by quarter notes F#3, E3, and D3, then a dotted half note G3. The Bass part starts with a quarter note G2, followed by quarter notes F#2, E2, and D2, then a dotted half note G2. The score includes dynamic markings (piano) and phrasing slurs.

Fig. 9—“Second Delayed Resolution,” mm. 31-32; *Ubi caritas*
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The final section of *Ubi caritas* begins *piano* with a reiteration of the opening text. Like the beginning, the soprano voice continues to carry the initial motive. Rather than presenting the chant in unison however, Gjeilo immediately provides a full harmonic accompaniment in the remaining voices. Harmonic progression, phrase cadences, and meter change to support text stress, continue to emulate the opening section. The text ‘Christi amor,’ concludes the phrase starting at m. 40. This phrase is harmonically identical to the opening (mm. 15-16), however, it is prolonged through quarter, half, and dotted half notes.

Gjeilo changes meter two final times to prolong tension in the concluding ‘Amen.’ As the alto voice sustains an F-sharp pedal, the tenor and bass voices descend in stepwise motion, as the soprano ascends. In the final two-measures, the bass and soprano arrive immediately on the tonic and dominant of F-sharp major. The alto and tenor

voices provide final tension in the concluding delayed resolution (Fig. 10), eventually joining the soprano and bass on the third and dominant of F-sharp major.

Fig. 10—“Final Delayed Resolution,” mm. 44-45; *Ubi caritas*
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Additional Performance Notes

I had the pleasure of conducting Gjeilo’s *Ubi caritas* as guest conductor/clinician of the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) Northern Colorado High School Women’s Honor Choir in 2010.⁶¹ Among the programmed repertoire, *Ubi caritas* was the immediate favorite of the ensembles and their conductors.

Shortly after, I introduced the work to my church ensemble to present in the service for Maundy Thursday.⁶² It too became an immediate favorite of the ensemble—

⁶¹ The author introduced Gjeilo’s SSAA arrangement for Women’s Chorus. At the time, most of the singers and conductors were unfamiliar with the choral music of Ola Gjeilo.

⁶² The author introduced Gjeilo’s SATB arrangement for his church ensemble. This choir consists of 25 volunteer singers.

being utilized three years in a row at the request of the choir members. These additional performance notes are provided from my conducting standpoint based on these experiences.

During the initial learning process, transitioning through phrase endings to the next section may be difficult. The transitions between mm. 27-28 and mm. 32-33 are particular examples. In these measures, each phrase ending, extended through suspension and a delay in resolution, is followed by silence. After a moment of silence, Gjeilo then presents the new section following an immediate modulation. Lastly, Gjeilo extends the three-measure conclusion by utilizing one-measure of $5/4$ meter. This can catch many ensembles by surprise.

Prelude

*Exsultate, Jubilate.
O vos animae beatae,
Exsultate, Jubilate.*

Rejoice, resound with joy.
O you blessed souls,
Rejoice, resound with joy.

*Summa Trinitas revelatu
Et ubique adoratur,
Date illi gloriam,
Date illi gloriam
Summa Trias adoratur,
Date illi gloriam.*

The Great Trinity is revealed
And everywhere adored,
Give glory,
Give it glory
The Great Triad is adored,
Give it glory.

*Tu virginum corona,
Tu nobis pacem dona.
Tu consolare affectus,
Unde suspirat cor.
Alleluia.*

You, o crown of virgins,
Grant us peace.
Console our feelings,
From which our hearts sigh.
Alleluia.⁶³

Composed for *divisi* SATB unaccompanied chorus, Gjeilo's *Prelude* synthesizes ideas from two previously written works for SSAA women's chorus, *Nya Vägar* and *Exsultate, Jubilate*.⁶⁴ A simple ABA work, its exuberant opening and closing sections emulate Scandinavian folk music,⁶⁵ with melodic and rhythmic movement through mixed meter. The middle section provides variety in texture with more serene and chant-like elements.⁶⁶

⁶³ Armstrong, Richard H. and Paul F. Zweifel. *The Three Versions of Mozart's Exsultate, Jubilate*. http://www.pzweifel.com/books-Bridge/exultate_jubilate.htm (accessed April 11, 2013). Although the composer discovered the text through an unknown online source, this article provides a translation of the text into English.

⁶⁴ The opening and closing sections of *Prelude* were reworked from *Nya Vägar*.

⁶⁵ Ola Gjeilo, interview by Ryan Garrison, Phoenix, AZ, 19 February 2013.

⁶⁶ The middle section of *Prelude* was reworked from *Exsultate, Jubilate*.

Text, Rhythm, and Meter

The text for *Prelude* comes from the Latin motet ‘Exsultate Jubilate.’ With its contrasting sections, Gjeilo sets the natural prosody of the text, which results in a wide variety of mixed meter throughout (figures 11-13, below, demonstrate his prolific use of mixed meter in *Prelude*). Initially, the multitude of rhythmic movement may appear overwhelming. Upon closer examination, the rhythms correspond appropriately to syllabic stresses of the text (Fig. 11).

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is a vocal line in F-sharp major (three sharps) with a dynamic marking of *ff*. The lyrics are: "Sum - ma Tri - ni - tas re - ve - la - tur et u - bi - que a - do -". The bottom staff is a drone line with the syllable "(Ha)" and "Ha" repeated. The meter changes from 12/8 to 6/8 to 12/8. The score is divided into three measures by bar lines.

Fig. 11—“Rhythms with Text,” mm. 10-12; *Prelude*
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A Brief Description of the Music of *Prelude*

Prelude begins *fortissimo* in F-sharp major “anchored by a robust drone in the lower voices.”⁶⁷ The alto and bass voices maintain this tonal center for the majority of the opening section on this sustained drone. The soprano and tenor voices introduce the

⁶⁷ Parke, Kathryn. *Northern Lights; Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo*, ed. Finn S. Gundersen (Colchester, Essex C02 8HX, England: Chandos Records Ltd, 2012), 10.

rhythmic folk-like dance element in unison (Fig. 12). Dynamics remain full, “with great force and joy,” in all voices.⁶⁸

♩ = 100 With great force and joy

ff

Soprano
Ex - sul - ta - te, ju - bi - la

ff

Alto
Ha

ff

Tenor
Ex - sul - ta - te, ju - bi - la

ff

Bass
Ha

Fig. 12—“Key, Use of Drone, Melodic/Rhythmic Movement,” mm. 1-4; *Prelude*
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In the opening section, Gjeilo places emphasis in the text with dynamics and tonal movement. A *fortissimo* entrance begins the work and text *Exsultate*, (“Rejoice!”) in all voices. A similar *fortissimo* entrance at mm. 9-10, expresses the text *Summa Trinitas revelatur* (“The Great Trinity is revealed”). In approaching the climax of the opening section at m. 16, a two-measure ascending motion in the soprano and tenor voices emphasize the text, *gloriam, data illi gloriam* (“give it glory!”). This text is repeated when all voices enter at m. 20, in a rhythmic conclusion to the opening section. As the section slows, the dissonance between melody and drone is resolved in the arrival of a cadence and *decrescendo* at m. 23.

⁶⁸ Ola Gjeilo, *Prelude*, Score. Composer’s Comments.

Following a brief pause, section B begins at m. 27 with a modulation to neighboring F-sharp minor. This middle section moves through a more complex harmonic texture created by dissonant intervals of seconds (mm. 29-30) and sevenths (mm.27-28), resolving to open fifth chord resolutions and cadences (Fig. 13).

Fig. 13—“Harmonic Texture (piano reduction),” mm. 27-31; *Prelude*
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As Gjeilo concludes the middle section, G-natural is no longer utilized, and added accidentals D-sharp and A-sharp (from mm. 35-38) provide a sense of movement and build toward the initial key. The middle section concludes with an open fifth cadence in mm. 39 followed by a short moment of pause.

Following this pause, the final section begins in a manner identical to the opening. Modulating back to F-sharp major, the alto and bass voices enter on the drone with an accented *fortissimo*. The soprano and tenor voices once again carry the melodic motive in unison, “sweeping the listener into the dance once more.”⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Parke, 10.

An alteration from the opening section occurs in m. 60 as Gjeilo prolongs a cadence without changing meter from the previous measure. In the opening section (m. 20), Gjeilo changes meter from 18/8 to 12/8 to arrive at a concluding cadence, followed with a fast release and immediate re-entrance on text. In the closing section, however, the meter does not change and the cadence is prolonged (Fig. 14). Lastly, Gjeilo composes an ascending conclusion to the work, placing the soprano and tenor voices a third higher than the previous conclusion of the opening section. The first and second alto voices are also higher, at a fifth and fourth, respectively.



Fig. 14—“Change in Meter in Concluding Section,” mm. 59-60; *Prelude*
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Additional Performance Notes

At first glance, the music in *Prelude* may appear demanding with its extensive rhythmic passages and frequent meter changes. However, its melodic movement is appealing, which can assist in the initial learning process of the work. The vocal ranges are accessible and lie in the middle part of the voice, allowing for significant dynamic presence (*fortissimo*, *fff*) when needed.

Stressing the text can assist the singer in becoming more comfortable with the work’s rhythmic passages and mixed meter. Although the drone in the alto and bass may seem simple, attention should be given to each release and accented re-entrance. These

entrances are important in providing additional rhythmic intensity to the melodic motive in the soprano and tenor voices.

Longer phrasing and legato movement of the middle section may present challenges with younger voices. Conductors should remind singers to maintain strong breath support to achieve contour of the line and text. Although the range does not present a problem, m. 32 can be challenging for tenors as they face a significant ascending interval leap of an octave through different parts of their range (F-sharp₃ to F-sharp₄). Sung on the text 'Alleluia,' unifying vowel placement within the tenor section can be difficult.

Prelude can introduce great energy in the choral experience, and allow significant growth in younger and less-experienced choirs. Its exuberant opening and closing sections present a lively alternative to any concert opener or program encore.

MODERATELY DIFFICULT WORKS

Northern Lights

*Pulchra es, amica mea,
suavis et decora filia Jerusalem,*

You are beautiful, my love,
a sweet and comely daughter of Jerusalem.

*Pulchra es, amica mea,
suavis et decora sicut Jerusalem,
terribilis sicut castrotum acies
ordinata.*

You are beautiful, my love,
a sweet and comely daughter of Jerusalem.
terrible as the sharp lines of a military
camp.

*Averte oculos tuos a me,
quia ipsi me avolare fecerunt.*

Turn your eyes from me,
because they have put me to flight.⁷⁰

Composed in December 2007 in his native Norway, Gjeilo was profoundly influenced with the imagery of nature that had surrounded him and the emotion it evoked.

Gjeilo recalls:

Looking out from the attic window that Christmas in Oslo, over a wintry lake under the stars, I was thinking about how this terrible beauty is so profoundly reflected in the northern lights, or *aurora borealis*. It is one of the most beautiful natural phenomena I've ever witnessed, and has such a powerful, electric quality, which must have been both mesmerizing and terrifying to people in the past, when no one knew what it was and when much superstition was attached to these experiences.⁷¹

Written for SATB *a cappella* chorus (with minimal *divisi*), *Northern Lights* was commissioned by and dedicated to the Central Bucks High School-West (Doylestown, Pennsylvania) Chamber Choir and conductor Dr. Joseph Orht, with support from the

⁷⁰ Jeffers, Ron. *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire*. Vol. 1, *Sacred Latin Texts* (Corvallis: Earthsongs, 1988), 224.

⁷¹ Parke, Kathryn. *Northern Lights; Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo*, ed. Finn S. Gundersen (Colchester, Essex C02 8HX, England: Chandos Records Ltd, 2012), 9.

Royal Norwegian Embassy in Washington, D.C. It received its premiere performance at the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. in January of 2008.

Text and Form

Through his selection of text for *Northern Lights*, Gjeilo shares his personal experience in witnessing the *aurora borealis* by creating a spiritual and visual component to the work. The biblical text, taken from the sixth chapter of the *Song of Songs*, provides a darkened texture to the work. It envisions “the beauty (*terribilis*) which is that of a beloved. A beauty so strong, it is almost overwhelming.”⁷²

Northern Lights is composed and divided into three sections identified as ABA-prime. The opening and closing sections present the text’s beautiful description of the ‘sweet and comely daughter.’ The contrasting middle section text describes the strong and ‘terrible beauty’ of the beloved.

A Brief Description of the Music of *Northern Lights*

The opening measures of *Northern Lights*, begins in the upper voices (soprano, alto, tenor) as the soprano presents a chant-like motive accompanied by the alto and tenor (Fig. 15). A dynamic marking of *piano* provides a light approach toward introducing the meaning of the text, *Pulchra es, amica mea* (“You are beautiful, my love”). The introduction arrives in m. 5 as the soprano voice suspends above the release in the alto and tenor.

⁷² Ola Gjeilo, interview by Ryan Garrison, Phoenix, AZ, 9 April 2013.



Fig. 15—“Soprano Chant Motive,” mm. 1-4; *Northern Lights*
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As the soprano voice suspends through m. 7, the chant motive is placed in the alto. This is similar to the soprano an octave lower (Fig. 16). As the soprano voice presents a descant echo of text above the chant, the bass and tenor voices provide stability in tempo and pulse. The soprano and alto voices share the chant motive throughout the entire opening section, concluding at m. 18. Although the key and tone center around B-flat (heard especially in the male voices), the chant sequence in the soprano and alto suggest the opening in D minor.

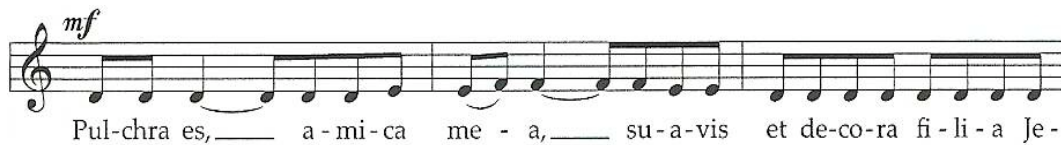


Fig. 16—“Alto Chant Motive,” mm. 6-8; *Northern Lights*
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In the contrasting middle section, Gjeilo continues to provide a dramatic component with text to music by presenting the hauntingly beautiful description of the beloved. Following a modulation to A minor, the soprano voice enters (*mezzo-piano*) with the new text in a flowingly legato manner. As the soprano presents the new text and this image of ‘terrible’ beauty, the remaining voices ascend homophonically, repeating the text ‘*Pulchra es,*’ reminding the listener of the beloved’s ‘simple’ beauty. Gjeilo

composes the accompanying voices in ascending parallel fifth movement (Fig. 17), solidifying the new key.

The alto continues with the motive and final description of this image in m. 29 by descending chromatically through a suspension left in the soprano. An F-sharp, on which the alto motive begins, helps transition the work toward the new key of E minor. As the alto presents the final portion of text, the remaining voices provide a similar accompanying movement as mentioned above. The same text, *'Pulchra es'* is utilized as well as ascending parallel fifth movement (Fig. 17). A sense of urgency also begins to unfold with Gjeilo's use of dynamic contrasts and a prolonged *crescendo* to *forte* in the alto, accompanied at *mezzo forte* by the remaining voices.

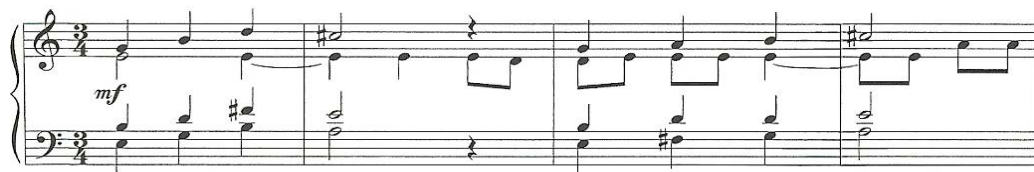


Fig. 17—“Parallel Fifth Movement Establishes Key,” mm. 30-33; *Northern Lights*
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The climax of the work begins at m. 36 with a prolonged seven-measure *crescendo*. As the alto voice concludes the text, the remaining voices continue to re-emphasize the image's 'simple' beauty, through the text *'amica mea.'* Dissonance provides additional harmonic texture through ascending motives in the soprano and tenor, all above a sustained bass line. The alto moves around the tonal center (G) provided in the bass. By m. 41, the soprano and bass voices *crescendo* on sustained pitches (E₅, G₃) as the tenor continues to ascend. This seven-measure *crescendo* builds to a *fortissimo* at m. 43, as all the voices arrive in E minor. The resolution is brief, however, as Gjeilo

concludes the climax with dissonance. The lower alto and tenor voices (*divisi*) descend to the seventh and ninth degrees of E minor.

The concluding section, which begins at m. 46, modulates back to the beginning key. The opening text is repeated as the soprano carries the chant-like motive, accompanied by the alto and tenor voices. The motive, however, alternates more significantly (than in the opening section) between the soprano and alto voices, while the male voices continue in their accompanying role.

The alto brings the repeat of text and the work to its conclusion at m. 63. As the remaining voices (STB) release and re-enter with their final pleas (*Pulchra es*), the alto voice continues to sustain the tonic for the remaining eight measures. Each accompanying plea becomes softer through successive dynamic markings of *mezzo piano*, *piano*, and *pianissimo*, achieving a calm and reflective conclusion. As the soprano, tenor, and bass release their final plea, the alto sustains the tonic until a *decrescendo* toward a silence concludes the work.

Additional Performance Notes

The music in *Northern Lights* is not especially demanding for the choir. Vocal ranges in all voice parts are accessible. Meter, rhythm, texture (minimal *divisi*) and harmonic movement also are not particularly demanding. Control and flexibility of vocal technique, however, are required to capture the dramatic essence of the text and music.

Dynamics play a vital role in communicating the dramatic intent of the text in *Northern Lights*. The many dynamic contrasts may challenge younger and less developed singers. The conductor should remind the ensemble to maintain breath

support and control, particularly through the extensively marked softer sections. Furthermore, its slower sections require significant energy to sustain elongated chords and support intonation.

The conductor should not become overly concerned with maintaining a particularly strict rhythm, tempo, and meter throughout, and allow for freedom by extending textual phrases and releases.

The Spheres

Kyrie eleison, Lord, have mercy,
Christe eleison, Christ, have mercy,
Kyrie eleison. Lord, have mercy.⁷³

The Spheres, originally composed as the opening movement of his *Sunrise Mass for Choir and String Orchestra*, is one of the two works derived from the mass, which may be performed separately. Despite its use of the Latin text, its English title is intended to create an atmosphere and sense of “floating in space, in darkness and relative silence, surrounded by stars and planets light-years away.”⁷⁴ This *a cappella* arrangement demonstrates Gjeilo’s personal and spiritual approach toward composing, and his strong desire to create visual images in the music he writes.⁷⁵

Gjeilo’s *Sunrise Mass*, from which *The Spheres* was derived, was commissioned and premiered by Majorstuen Chamber Choir and Nova Chamber Choir in 2008. This *a cappella* adaptation for SSAATTBB chorus was dedicated to conductor Gary Graden who premiered the work in Oklahoma City in 2009 with the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) College Honor Chamber Choir.

⁷³ Jeffers, Ron. *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire*. Vol. 1, *Sacred Latin Texts* (Corvallis: Earthsongs, 1988), 48.

⁷⁴ Parke, Kathryn. *Northern Lights; Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo*, ed. Finn S. Gundersen (Colchester, Essex C02 8HX, England: Chandos Records Ltd, 2012), 9.

⁷⁵ *The Spheres*, originally accompanied, is the only *a cappella* arrangement derived from the Mass.

Text, Form, and Key

Initially the beginning movement of his *Sunrise Mass*, Gjeilo's setting of the Greek text 'Kyrie eleison,' respectfully observes the order and traditions of the Ordinary of the Mass.

The Spheres is presented in three contrasting sections, which will be discussed in further detail. Part I presents a formation of the initial motive and extended theme. A second unifying theme is presented in Part II as an ascent to climax, which leads to the presentation of the opening motive in Part III.

Gjeilo often provides dramatic intensity throughout his works by composing frequent key transitions. In *The Spheres*, however, Gjeilo maintains the same key of C-sharp minor for the full duration of the work.

A Brief Description of the Music of *The Spheres*

A recurring characteristic of Gjeilo's compositional approach is heard in the opening section of *The Spheres*, an overlapping fade-in/fade-out effect.⁷⁶ Accompanied with expressive swells and dramatic dynamic contrast (*pianissimo*, *crescendo*, *mezzo piano*, *decrescendo*), this effect evokes a serene atmosphere and visual component toward the formation of the main theme. The opening measures (beginning to m. 21) get no louder than a *mezzo piano*.

Gjeilo develops the main theme in a drawn-out approach (Fig. 18), from the beginning of the work to m. 21. As the soprano voices introduce the prolonged theme,

⁷⁶ A similar technique is utilized in *Serenity*, discussed later in this paper.

the alto and tenor voices provide additional texture with each overlapping chord. Beginning in m. 9, as each chord fades in and out, a new syllable is added to the line, completing the utterance of the text, ‘Kyrie.’ This concept continues until the entire text, ‘Kyrie eleison,’ is presented.

Fig. 18—“Main Theme Prolonged,” mm. 1-7; *The Spheres*
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The main theme continues to develop, similar to the opening, in m. 23, on the text ‘Christe eleison’ (Fig. 19). With the absence of the bass voice from mm. 23-38, the lighter texture of the upper voices provide the composer’s intended visual image of ‘floating in space.’⁷⁷

Fig. 19—“Main Theme Continues,” mm. 23-29; *The Spheres*
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⁷⁷ Ola Gjeilo, *The Spheres*, Score. Composer’s Comments.

The opening presentation of the theme is repeated in the soprano at m. 39, with full *divisi* in the remaining voices providing additional texture. Rather than having the theme suspend on the dominant, as heard in the opening, Gjeilo extends the theme in a descending movement, arriving on the tonic. A *crescendo* to *forte* concludes the theme and brings all voices to a sustained C-sharp minor triad at m. 61, where an eight-measure *decrescendo* provides a peaceful conclusion to the opening section and main theme.

The second theme is developed through a cluster of ascending minor scale tones and is repeated twice. Although brief, this theme provides an expansion of energy through tension in the ascending dissonance (Fig. 20). Gjeilo composes dramatic dynamics (*piano*, *crescendo*, *forte*, *fortissimo*), which provide additional tension.

Fig. 20—“Ascending Clusters,” mm. 69-74; *The Spheres*
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The final section begins at m. 81 with a clearer statement of the opening theme, which was “hidden in the chiming entrances of the discrete vocal lines.”⁷⁸ Gjeilo describes the final movement as a “chorale version of the theme—a microcosm of the entire Mass.”⁷⁹ Rather than prolonging the main theme, Gjeilo provides the statement through descending intervals in a steady quarter note motion (Fig. 21/a and Fig. 21b).⁸⁰ This statement also results in parallel fifth movement among the voices (Fig.22).

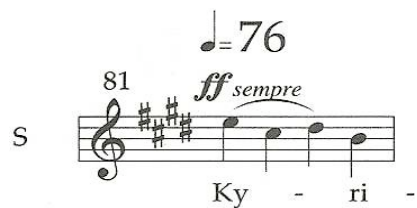


Fig. 21a—“Initial Theme Presented in Quarter Notes,” m. 81; *The Spheres*
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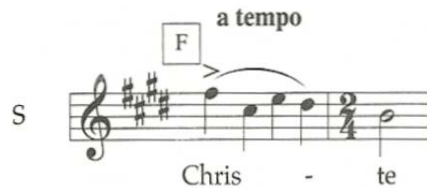


Fig. 21b—“Initial Theme Presented in Quarter Notes,” m. 89; *The Spheres*
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⁷⁸ Parke, 9.

⁷⁹ Ola Gjeilo, *The Spheres*, Score. Composer’s Comments.

⁸⁰ Refer to previous Figures 18 and 19, which present the main theme in an extended overlapping effect.

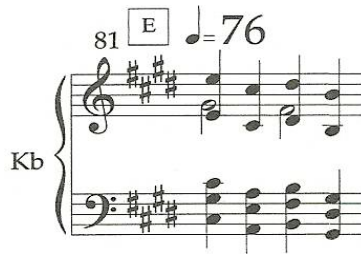


Fig. 22—“Parallel Fifth Movement,” mm. 81; *The Spheres*
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The concluding section begins at m. 96, with reiteration of the text ‘Kyrie eleison.’ Each voice presents the text in a descending motive, arriving on and sustaining the tonic, which concludes the work in unison. Gjeilo provides one final *crescendo* prior to release, which is symbolic of the spiritual and contemplative journey that continues in the *Sunrise Mass*, following this opening movement of *The Spheres*.⁸¹

Additional Performance Notes

As the beginning of Gjeilo’s *Sunrise Mass*, *The Spheres* provides an image of beautiful, serene, and sacred meditation on the spiritual journey “from heaven to earth.”⁸² The music in *The Spheres* is not necessarily demanding for the choir. The vocal ranges in all the voice parts are accessible. The sustained notes and dramatic dynamic intention of the upper soprano line may become challenging for younger voices, as the notes significantly lie in the break of the voice.

⁸¹ Rugen, Kira. *About Ola Gjeilo’s Sunrise: Symphonic Mass for Choir and String Orchestra*. Arizona State University, 2010, 2.

⁸² Parke, 9.

Tota pulchra es

*Tota pulchra es, Maria,
et macula originalis non est in te.
Vestimentum tuum candidum quasi nix,
et facies tua sicut sol.*

Thou art all fair, O Mary,
and the stain of original sin is not in thee.
Your clothing is white like snow,
And your face is like the sun.

*Tota pulchra es, Maria,
et macula originalis non est in te.
Tu Gloria Jerusalem, tu laetitia Israel,*

You are completely pure, Mary,
and the stain of original sin is not in thee.
You are the glory of Jerusalem, the joy of
Israel,

*tu honorificentia populi nostri.
Tota pulchra es, Maria.*

and the honor of our people.
You are completely pure, Mary.⁸³

As one of Ola Gjeilo's earliest choral compositions (2001), *Tota pulchra es* presents the composer's profound interest and love for Latin text. Gjeilo was especially influenced by Duruflé's *Four Gregorian Motets*,⁸⁴ and sets the text of the second motet.⁸⁵ The Mogens Dahl Chamber Choir provided the initial recording in 2008, with their release of *Sacred North (Exlibris)*. *Tota pulchra es* is written for a *cappella* SATB *divisi* choir.

Text, Form, Key, and Meter

The prayer *Tota pulchra es*, utilizes the first three of the five antiphon texts for the Psalms of the Second Vespers for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed

⁸³ Jeffers, Ron. *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire*. Vol. 1, *Sacred Latin Texts* (Corvallis: Earthsongs, 1988), 224.

⁸⁴ Maurice Duruflé (b. 1902, d. 1986) composed a setting of the text for women's voices.

⁸⁵ Gjeilo also set the text 'Ubi caritas,' which is the first motet in Duruflé's *Four Gregorian Motets*. *Ubi caritas* was discussed earlier in this project.

Virgin Mary. *Tota pulchra es* is a fourth century antiphon praising the Virgin Mary's "pure, meek, and sinless nature."⁸⁶ The verses were derived from *The Song of Songs* and *The Book of Judith*.⁸⁷

Tota pulchra es is presented in three slow contrasting sections identified as ABC. The form is derived through the text and key modulations, and within each section, builds to its own climax.

The opening section is divided into two keys, beginning in A minor. A common tone modulation leads into the second half of the opening in G minor.⁸⁸ Although the second half moves through numerous keys, the motive and accompanying roles pivot around E-flat, which becomes the common tone modulation (V of A-flat minor) leading into the next section. The second section begins and ends in A-flat minor. As the tenor voice sustains a C-flat in the conclusion of the middle section, Gjeilo provides a B-natural (V of E major) in the soprano voice, which begins the final motive of the third section. The work ends in E major.

Meter and rhythm are simple throughout. Meter change is minimal, and is provided to briefly shorten or extend phrases of text.

⁸⁶ Jeffers, 224.

⁸⁷ *The Song of Songs* provides the first two verses of text. The third verse of text is from *The Book of Judith*.

⁸⁸ Common tone modulations are used frequently throughout *Tota pulchra es* and will be discussed in further detail below.

A Brief Description of the Music of *Tota pulchra es*

Adhering to the purity and meek nature of the text, *Tota Pulchra Es* begins with a serene entrance of women's voices. Gjeilo provides a gentle approach toward the text 'Tota pulchra es' ("You are completely beautiful"), praising the Virgin's pure and sinless nature. The motive is placed in the upper soprano and accompanied by the remaining voices for the first part of the opening section. The first conclusion of text occurs in m. 6 with an unsettling half cadence, which suggests the opening key of A minor (Fig. 23).

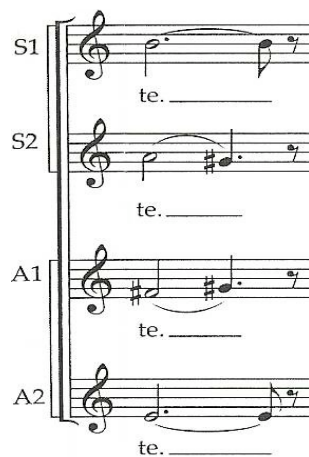
The image shows a musical score for four voices: Soprano 1 (S1), Soprano 2 (S2), Alto 1 (A1), and Alto 2 (A2). Each voice part is written on a five-line staff with a treble clef. The lyrics 'te.' are written below each staff. The music is in a key with one sharp (F#) and ends with a half cadence on the dominant (D) in measure 6. The notes for S1 are G4, A4, B4, G4. For S2, they are F#4, G4, A4, G4. For A1, they are E4, F#4, G4, F#4. For A2, they are C4, D4, E4, D4.

Fig. 23—"Half Cadence and Key Identification," m. 6; *Tota pulchra es*
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As the women's voices *decrescendo* to conclude the opening motive, Gjeilo utilizes a common tone modulation in the bass voices' entrance at mm. 13-14. The basses enter on a sustained G (Fig. 24), which pivots the key of the second half to G minor. The men echo the serene approach to the text heard in the beginning from the women's entrance. The motive is placed in the tenor voice and is accompanied through *divisi* bass lines. A *crescendo* begins in the baritone at m. 18 and is sustained through the

entrances of the remaining divided voices. The work continues to *crescendo* as all voices enter at m. 21.

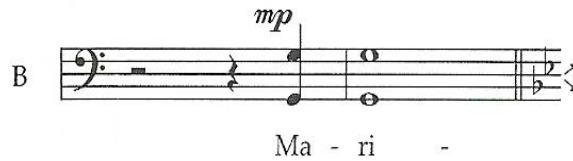


Fig. 24—"Common Tone Modulation," mm. 13-14; *Tota pulchra es*
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Moving toward the opening section's climax, Gjeilo composes complex harmonies with all voices *divisi*. As the motive returns to the upper soprano voice, the remaining voices provide an echo of the text throughout. Gjeilo creates dynamic intensity through his written instructions, *sempre poco a poco crescendo*. The motive begins *mezzo piano* and ascends to a *fortissimo* and climax at mm. 26-27. The climax is brief, however, as all voices *decrescendo* back to *mezzo forte*, and eventually *mezzo piano*. The bass voice concludes the opening section with another common tone modulation. This time, an E-flat is heard as the dominant of the upcoming key of A-flat minor.

The second section begins in the new key with the motive placed in the tenor voice. Gjeilo utilizes the lower voices (alto, tenor, bass), to present the new text, which equates the Virgin to the purity of snow and the brightness of the sun.⁸⁹ The soprano voice is omitted for the duration of section two. As the motive alternates between the alto and tenor voices, the lower tenor and bass voice provides stability in the new key with frequent drones (Fig. 25), as seen in mm. 47-48.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Jeffers, 225.

⁹⁰ The use of drones, which provides stability of key, is also seen in figure 38.

The image shows a musical score for four voices: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The music is in A-flat minor, indicated by three flats in the key signature. The lyrics are 'Ves - ti - men - tum tu - um can - di - dum'. The score includes dynamics such as *mf* and *cresc.* (crescendo). The Soprano part has a whole rest in the first measure. The Alto, Tenor, and Bass parts have a melodic line that ascends and then descends, with the Tenor part having a sustained note in the final measure.

Fig. 25—“Stability of Key,” mm. 47-48; *Tota pulchra es*
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Section two begins *piano* and ascends gradually with frequent *crescendi* to the section’s climax, which is achieved by another *fortissimo*. The section begins to conclude with a *decrescendo* into a half cadence at m. 55.

The men’s voices provide a final reiteration of the text’s beautiful description of Mary to conclude section two. The lower tenor voice continues to carry the motive, as the upper tenor and bass voices provide a final echo of the text. As the section concludes in A-flat minor, the upper tenor suspends the third, which becomes the dominant of the proceeding key (V of E major). The work presents a final common tone modulation, as the soprano voice re-enters off the sustained C-flat provided from the tenor, written now as a B-natural (Fig 26).⁹¹

⁹¹ The B-natural provides clarity toward the upcoming key of E major.

Dynamics continue to play an important role toward presenting the descriptive intentions required of the text. The section begins *piano*, and a prolonged *crescendo* to *forte* provides a climax at m. 69. Similar to the previous sections, Gjeilo utilizes a *decrescendo* to conclude the text and the section.

The final text, which presents Mary as being ‘the honor of our people,’⁹³ begins the conclusion of the work at m. 74. Gjeilo provides a brief moment of reflection toward the text through the voices lower tessitura and homophonic movement. The work continues to *decrescendo* into a half cadence in m. 78, which provides a final sense of urgency and resolve.

The soprano and tenor voices solidify the key of E major sustaining on the tonic at mm. 81-82, as the alto voices continue to migrate around the third and dominant, respectively. All of the voices arrive to the E major triad in m. 82.

Additional Performance Notes

The composer’s sensitive approach to the music in *Tota pulchra es* appropriately adheres to the descriptive imagery required of the text. Although vocal ranges are not especially demanding throughout all voice parts, the consistently high placement of the upper tenor voice can be challenging for younger singers.⁹⁴ Control and flexibility of vocal technique is necessary to capture the essence of the text and music.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ The upper tenor line is placed in the higher part of the range for a large majority of the work. This includes the highest note, A-flat₄.

Dynamic contrasts play a significant role in communicating the purity and meek intentions of the text, may also challenge younger singers. The work's quiet sections call for a purer tone, which is best achieved through minimal vibrato. The work, however, does present opportunities to add color through vibrato, and allows for more comfortable, relaxed, and natural singing.

Serenity

*O magnum mysterium,
et admirabile sacramentum,*

*ut animalia viderent Dominum natum,
jacentem in praesepio!*

*Beata Virgo, cujus viscera
meruerunt portare
Dominum Christum.
Alleluia.*

O great mystery,
and wonderful sacrament,

that animals should see the newborn
Lord,
lying in a manger!

Blessed is the Virgin whose womb
was worthy to bear
Christ the Lord.
Alleluia.⁹⁵

Gjeilo, like many composers before him, provides his passionate impression of the ancient text, ‘*O magnum mysterium*.’⁹⁶ Through its alternate title *Serenity*,⁹⁷ “an allusion to the composer’s verbal instruction at the top of the score,”⁹⁸ Gjeilo makes his compositional intention clear: to provide a visual component toward the wonderment, mystery, and fascination evoked in the text.

Serenity was commissioned by and dedicated to the Central Bucks High School-West (Doylestown, Pennsylvania) Choir and director, Dr. Joseph Ohrt. This *a cappella*

⁹⁵ Jeffers, Ron. *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire*. Vol. 1, *Sacred Latin Texts* (Corvallis: Earthsongs, 1988), 175.

⁹⁶ Some other composers to utilize the text are Giovanni Gabrieli (b. 1554, d. 1612), Giovanni Palestrina (b. 1525, d. 1594), Francis Poulenc (b. 1899, d. 1963), and more recently, composers Javier Busto (b. 1949) and Morten Lauridsen (b. 1943).

⁹⁷ It is common for Gjeilo to utilize English titles with Latin text, presenting his spiritual approach toward the music, or in this case, setting the aesthetic meaning of the text.

⁹⁸ Parke, Kathryn. *Northern Lights; Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo*, ed. Finn S. Gundersen (Colchester, Essex C02 8HX, England: Chandos Records Ltd, 2012), 7.

setting is composed for SATB *divisi* choir, accompanied by a solo cello or violin.⁹⁹

Gjeilo’s intentions for *Serenity* are to provide a “passionate peacefulness—a peacefulness that is not passive, but filled with warmth, faith, passion, and gentle intent.”¹⁰⁰

Text and Form

A responsorial chant, the ‘*O magnum mysterium*’ text is derived from the fourth response for the *Matins* service for Christmas, which evokes “all the wonder and fascination of the incarnation of Christ.”¹⁰¹

Serenity is divided into three sections identified as ABA. The opening and closing sections portray the text’s imagery and mystery through a serenely melodic cello solo (Fig. 28).¹⁰² The contrasting middle section is *a cappella*, and provides a sense of reflection to what is witnessed in the miraculous scene.

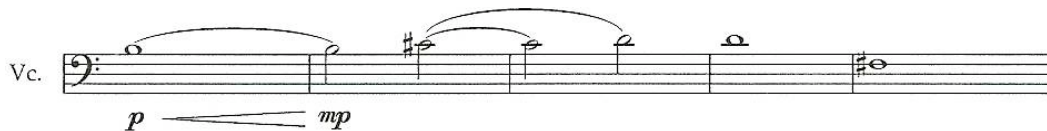


Fig. 28—“Cello Solo,” mm. 10-14; *Serenity*
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⁹⁹ Upon publication, Gjeilo provided notation for both solo cello and violin. For the recording, Bruffy chose the cello.

¹⁰⁰ Ola Gjeilo, interview by Ryan Garrison, Phoenix, AZ, 19 February 2013.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² This solo was originally composed to text for soprano. It was later decided that its lengthy phrases and higher tessitura could be problematic for the singer to support throughout.

A Brief Description of the Music of *Serenity*

As an introduction, the opening movement begins *a cappella* in all voices. Gjeilo utilizes expressive swells in the voices, through a wide variety of dynamic markings, including *pianissimo*, *crescendo*, *piano*, and *decrescendo*, which is reflective toward the mystery of the text. These expressive swells in the voices provide the accompanying role to the cello solo, which enters at m. 10. As the cello enters, the dynamic swelling in the accompanying voices create an overlapping texture and continuance of sound between the two parts (Fig. 29).

The image shows a musical score for the piece *Serenity*, measures 22 through 27. The score is arranged in five staves: Violoncello (Vc.), Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The cello part (Vc.) begins at measure 22 with a dynamic marking of *f* (forte). The vocal parts (S, A, T, B) enter at measure 22 with a dynamic marking of *più* (pianissimo) and sing the lyrics "num my ste". The vocal parts feature expressive swells and dynamic markings of *p* (piano), *mp* (mezzo-piano), and *p* (piano) throughout the passage. The overlapping texture between the cello solo and the voices is highlighted by the dynamic markings and the phrasing of the notes.

Fig. 29—"Overlapping Effects Between Solo and Voices," mm. 22-27; *Serenity*

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Although the cello solo ends at m. 31, it continues to double the motive placed in the lower alto voice at m. 33. The overlapping effect now occurs within the *divisi* of the voices, allowing for added dissonance and harmonic tension with the motive. Dynamics become more significant with markings of *piano*, prolonged *crescendo* to *mezzo forte*,

and *decrescendo* back to *piano*. The opening section cadences and concludes on a G major triad at m. 50.

Identifying key throughout the opening movement requires going beyond the initial sound. Despite its opening B minor triad, the work moves around a tonal center on G. The highest movement in the cello solo provides a climactic approach to G in mm. 25-26. Furthermore, the bass voices sustain open fifths on the tonic and dominant of G throughout, where in mm. 36-37, the tenor voice provides the third. Other parallel fifth movement descends or ascends by step around G, providing the brief dissonance and harmonic tension mentioned above, before resolving back to the tone center. Lastly, the sustained pedal on G in the tenor voices (the longest sustained voice in the conclusion of the opening) remains significantly present until the arrival of all voices on a G major triad at m. 50.

The contrasting middle section begins with a modulation to the dominant of the conclusion from the opening section. The high tenor and low bass voices solidify the new key, remaining on a D pedal for the full duration of the section.¹⁰³

This *a cappella* section especially highlights the women's voices. Essentially a duet, an ascending unison introduction in mm. 51 splits into two separate melodic motives, heard as the soprano continues ascending, while the alto descends. The prolonged text in the alto, however, provides an echo response to the text presented one beat before (m. 55), suggesting the initial theme in the soprano. Other responses occur in the alto at m. 60 and m. 63. The general movement within the soprano and alto voices is

¹⁰³ The high tenor voice briefly descends to the seventh in one measure, before ascending back to the tonic.

a similarly condensed idea of the opening section's overlapping technique between the voices and solo cello.

The work begins to climax starting at m. 63, marked with a significantly sustained *crescendo*. An overlapping effect is utilized between the soprano and remaining voices, providing brief dissonance and intensity in the ascending motion of the line. This ascent is marked with dynamic contrast (five-measure *crescendo* to *fortissimo* in all voices), and wide vocal ranges, heard especially at the climax in the high soprano voice (Fig. 30).

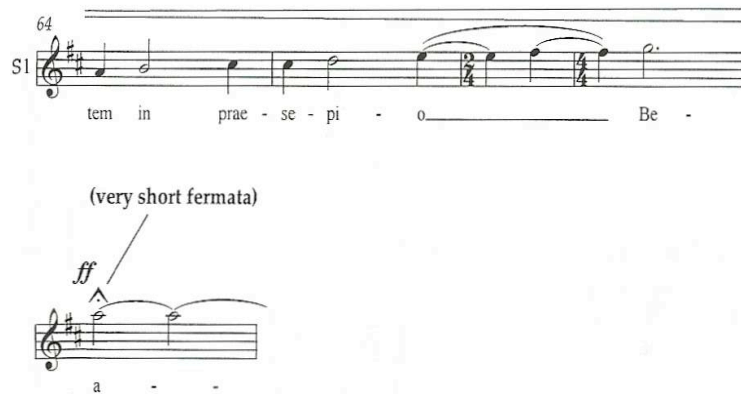


Fig. 30—"Range and Dynamic Contrast Toward Climax," mm. 64-68; *Serenity*
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Following the climax at m. 68, Gjeilo composes a homophonic descent in the soprano and alto above sustained chords in the tenor and bass voice. A prolonged three-measure *decrescendo* brings the middle section to a cadence in D major at m. 74, where the arrival of all voices is marked with a final *crescendo* to *mezzo forte* and *decrescendo*, toward release.

A transition back to the opening key begins the concluding section identical to m. 33, where the alto voice presents the melodic motive doubled by the cello. Gjeilo continues to utilize dramatic and expressive dynamic markings within each voice line,

providing additional overlapping texture. These extensive markings within each individual voice line are significant toward the larger build required of the composer (as instructed in the score), from mm. 79-87. Rather than allowing the motive to continue its ascent, however, Gjeilo begins a descent in the voices, placing the melody in the upper soprano, where it remains for the duration of the work.

An 'Alleluia' response concludes *Serenity* beginning at m. 95, with the upper soprano voice arriving and sustaining a tonic G the remaining thirteen measures of the work. As a *crescendo* from *piano* to *mezzo piano* is emphasized in the upper soprano, Gjeilo composes a *decrescendo* in the remaining voices, resolving dissonance of the previously sustained chord of second, third, and fourth scale degrees. Initial resolution is heard briefly through the arrival of the concluding G major, in m. 95. The alto and tenor provide final moments of dissonance, moving to the fourth and sixth degrees of G major, as the soprano and bass voice provide grounding to the work, sustaining the tonic. All voices arrive on a G major chord at m. 103, where a prolonged *decrescendo* provides a serene conclusion to the work.

Additional Performance Notes

The music in Gjeilo's *Serenity* presents a pleasant approach to this popular text. With the cello adding texture to the voices and through his use of dynamics, Gjeilo provides a component of imagery and reflection required by the mystical scene and its text.

The music in *Serenity* can be demanding for the choir. Although the range of the upper soprano is relatively wide (as seen in Fig. 30), the ranges in the remaining voices

are accessible. As the bass voice plays a significant role in providing darker texture, the lower notes need to be especially present, which can be difficult with younger developing voices. Lastly, control, support, and flexibility of vocal technique are required for the exceedingly sustained passages heard throughout the entire work.

Dynamics play a vital role in providing the mystical imagery and dramatic intent of the text. The breath and vocal support required for softer singing, and frequent use of *crescendo* to *decrescendo*, can be especially challenging for untrained or younger singers.

ADVANCED WORKS

Phoenix (Agnus Dei)

*Agnus Dei, qui tollis
peccata mundi, miserere nobis.*

Lamb of God, who takest away the
sin of the world, have mercy on us.

*Agnus Dei, qui tollis
peccata mundi, miserere nobis.*

Lamb of God, who takest away the
sin of the world, have mercy on us.

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

Lamb of God, who takest away the
sin of the world, grant us peace¹⁰⁴

Gjeilo's interest in composing this work evolved during his first visit to the southwestern city and its surrounding desert. It was here that "the quiet beauty and barrenness of the landscape,"¹⁰⁵ provided a visual component that inspired the work. In addition, the art of glass sculptor Dale Chihuly, who was presenting an exhibit at the Phoenix Desert Botanical Gardens during his initial visit,¹⁰⁶ also provided a lasting impression on the composer. Influenced by composer Thomas Newman, Gjeilo provides another cinematic approach in composing this new work.¹⁰⁷ *Phoenix (Agnus Dei)*, symphonic in nature, "is more like film music set to pictures and memories,"¹⁰⁸ that is inspired by images of the city, the desert, and art. Composed for SATB *divisi* chorus, this

¹⁰⁴ Jeffers, Ron. *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire*. Vol. 1, *Sacred Latin Texts* (Corvallis: Earthsongs, 1988), 56.

¹⁰⁵ Parke, Kathryn. *Northern Lights; Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo*, ed. Finn S. Gundersen (Colchester, Essex C02 8HX, England: Chandos Records Ltd, 2012), 5.

¹⁰⁶ I joined the composer at the Phoenix exhibit of Mr. Chihuly's work.

¹⁰⁷ Ola Gjeilo, interview by Ryan Garrison, 17 February 2013.

¹⁰⁸ Parke, 5.

a cappella work was commissioned by Joy Crews Lubeck and dedicated to The Phoenix Chorale in celebration of its 50th anniversary season. The work received its premiere in Phoenix in February of 2009.

Text

The ‘Agnus Dei’ text was not selected for any specific reason or literal meaning, rather for its “singability and comfortable vowels.”¹⁰⁹ The text plays a “servant role” to the music.¹¹⁰ This allowed Gjeilo to compose longer sustained notes, melismas, and phrases.¹¹¹ Gjeilo believes that other well-known composers may have utilized this technique for similar reasons. He was especially influenced by Barber’s *Adagio*¹¹² and Elgar’s *Nimrod*¹¹³ as “two of the most hauntingly beautiful pieces ever written,”¹¹⁴ for utilizing similar compositional approach.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Gjeilo, interview, 17 February 2013.

¹¹¹ For singers, this may be easier to achieve through the use of neutral vowels.

¹¹² Gjeilo was influenced by the choral arrangement of Barber’s *Adagio* in which utilizes neutral vowels as text.

¹¹³ Gjeilo refers to Elgar’s *Enigma Variation* (*Nimrod* is the ninth variation) in which the composer gives general impressions of the subjects’ personalities, portrays visual components, and makes musical references to specific characteristics or events.

¹¹⁴ Ola Gjeilo, *Agnus Dei: Phoenix*, Score. Composer’s Comments.

A Brief Description of the Music of *Phoenix (Agnus Dei)*

The work begins *piano* with treble voices on sustained phrasing patterns. The melodic contour is placed in the upper soprano voice, accompanied by the lower soprano and upper alto (Fig. 31). Although no particular key is established, the entrance of all voices at m. 12 suggests E minor in the introduction, from the beginning to m. 25.

♩ = 69
p

Soprano 1
Ag - nus De - i, ag - nus De - i,

Soprano 2
p
Ag - - - nus De - i,

Alto 1
p
Ag - - - nus De - i,

Fig. 31—"Image and Music," mm. 1-7; *Phoenix (Agnus Dei)*
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All voices enter in mm. 11-12, where E minor is established in the male voices, particularly the bass. As the upper soprano voice concludes the opening motive upon the entrance of the remaining voices, the lower soprano, alto, and upper tenor provide concluding movement, echoing the motive heard previously in the upper soprano. The introduction concludes at m. 24 with a perfect cadence in E minor.

Following a brief pause, Gjeilo immediately modulates to G major to begin the second section, placing the motive in the soprano voices as the remaining voices accompany through sustained notes and minimal movement (Fig. 32). Dynamics remain *mezzo piano*.

Fig. 32—“Soprano Motive with Accompanying Voices,” mm. 26-32; *Phoenix (Agnus Dei)*

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A prolonged *crescendo* to *mezzo forte* and another modulation (F# major) leads to a new motive presented at m. 36 in the upper soprano and tenor. The lower soprano and alto simultaneously move the line forward with a more rhythmic motion as the bass provides stability in the new key. Dynamic contrast and harmonic movement are provided by another *crescendo* to *forte* in mm. 39-40, and modulation (E-flat major). The following measure (m. 40) creates harmonic intervals and movement through the use of parallel fifths in the voices (Fig. 33). Although brief, m. 40 is the first homophonic measure of the work, and remains the only one until the final conclusion.

S1,S2 *f*
 Mi - se - re - re, mi - se - re - re,
 A1 *f*
 Mi - se - re - re, mi - se - re - re_
 A2 *f*
 Mi - se - re - re, mi - se - re - re_
 T1 *f*
 Mi - se - re - re, mi - se - re - re,
 T2 *f*
 Mi - se - re - re, mi - se - re - re,
 B1,B2 *f*
 Mi - se - re - re, mi - se - re - re,

Fig. 33—“Homophonic Parallel Fifths,” m. 40; *Phoenix (Agnus Dei)*
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The second section concludes similarly to the introduction as the soprano voices bring the melodic motive to a cadence in the new key (E-flat major). The remaining voices echo the text to create a delayed resolution.

The melodic motive from the second section returns in the soprano voices at m. 46, following another modulation to A-flat major (Fig. 34/a-b). Although its melodic movement, rhythmic structure and meter remain identical, the accompanying voices are no longer in unison, providing additional harmonic texture through *divisi*. A sense of urgency is heard through the use of dynamic markings *mezzo piano*, *mezzo forte*, and *crescendo*, to an intense *forte*, for the final inclusion of the main melodic motive.



Fig. 34a—*Phoenix (Agnus Dei)*, mm. 26-27; soprano



Fig. 34b—*Phoenix (Agnus Dei)*, mm. 46-47; soprano

Fig. 34a and Fig. 34b—“Motive in Different Keys,” mm. 26-27/46-47; *Phoenix (Agnus Dei)*

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Following a *crescendo* in m. 55 and another modulation to G-flat Major, the melodic motive returns a final time at m. 56. The soprano voices continue to carry the motive; however, the upper tenor voice (in unison with the sopranos) is included, adding emphasis to the theme. The alto and bass voices in *divisi* maintain the full harmonic structure in the accompaniment.

Rather than concluding the third presentation of the theme, Gjeilo immediately transitions into the ‘*dona nobis*’ text, where a harmonic progression beginning in G-flat major ascends toward the climax through a seven-bar *crescendo*. The first ascent concludes through a unison V of G-flat major (C#) in the soprano, alto, and tenor voices.

During the previous seven-bar *crescendo* leading to *fortissimo (fff)*, a second homophonic ascent to climax begins at m. 71. As the soprano, alto, and tenor voices ascend, the bass voice descends through a stepwise circle of fifths progression (Fig. 35) to m. 77, as the work arrives in C major.



Fig. 35—“Circle of Fifths Progression,” mm. 71-76; *Phoenix (Agnus Dei)*
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A brief conclusion begins following a measure of silence and modulation to E major. Dynamic contrast to *piano* and the absence of the soprano voice provide a darker timbre and color toward the conclusion. The soprano re-enters at m. 85, *pianissimo* (*ppp*), with a final peaceful plea (*‘pacem’*), echoed by the remaining lower voices.

Additional Performance Notes

The music in *Phoenix (Agnus Dei)* requires a choir of more advanced and versatile singers. This beautiful setting of the ‘Agnus Dei’ text contains wide vocal ranges in all voices, especially in the soprano and bass. Control and flexibility of vocal technique are required to capture the essence of the music. This can be particularly challenging for young singers, due significant interval leaps in the soprano motive and its dramatic dynamic contrasts (Fig. 36). Its complex meter and rhythms in the motive and harmonic movement can also be challenging in the initial learning process.

The image displays four musical staves. The top two are bass staves (B2) in bass clef. The first has a sustained note with the lyric 'no' below it. The second has a sustained note with the lyric 'pa' below it. The bottom two are soprano staves (S1) in treble clef. The first is in 4/4 time, showing a melodic line with the lyrics 'tol - lis pec-'. The second is in 6/4 time, showing a sustained note with the lyric 'pa' and a 'ppp' dynamic marking above it.

Fig. 36—“Example of Ranges,” mm. 21, 86 (bass) and mm. 49, 85 (soprano); *Phoenix (Agnus Dei)*

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With excessive sustained notes and long phrases, vibrato should only be utilized for additional color. Heavy and uncontrolled vibrato could cause intonation problems throughout the heavily composed *divisi*. This can make the work vocally demanding, and the conductor should plan rehearsals accordingly so that singers do not become vocally exhausted.

Unicornis captivatur

*Unicornis captivatur,
Aule regum presentatur
Venatorum laqueo,
Palo serpens est levatus
Medicatur sauciatus
Veneno vipereo.*

The Unicorn is captured,
It's presented to the royal court
In the hunters' snare,
Creeping, it freed itself from the pole
Because it's wounded, it heals itself
With the viper's venom.

*Alleluia canite,
Agnō morienti,
Alleluia pangite,
Alleluia promite
Leoni vincenti.*

Sing Alleluia,
To the dying lamb,
Sing Alleluia,
Cry Alleluia
To the victorious Lion.

*Pellicano vulnerato
Vita redit pro peccato
Nece stratis misera.
Phos fenicis est exusta,
Concremanturque vetusta
Macrocosmi scelera.*

Life returns to the wounded Pelican
After miserable death
In its nest for the sins of the world.
The Phoenix' light is burnt out,
The ancient sins of the world
Are utterly consumed by flame.

*Idrus intrat crocodillum,
Extis privat, necat illum,
Vivus inde rediens;
Tris diebus dormitavit
Leo, quem resuscitavit
Basileus rugiens.*

The Hydra enters the crocodile,
Deprives it of its entrails, kills it,
And comes back alive;
Three days long
the Lion slept till the King
Awakened it with a roar.¹¹⁵

As one of Gjeilo's earliest composed choral works (2001), *Unicornis captivatur* portrays the composer's talent of combining early music elements of chant and text with modern harmony and dissonance. Composed for unaccompanied SSAATTBB chorus, *Unicornis captivatur* was "not written for any kind of occasion or commission, but born

¹¹⁵ Kretz, John and Karl Kügle, English Translation. *Engelberg Codex 314*, ed. and trans. Wulf Arlt, Schweizerische Musikdenkmäler; Bd.11 (Winterthur, Schweiz: Amadeus, c1986), 6.

from the inspiration of a particular text that lights a spark in the composer's heart."¹¹⁶

The work received its premiere by the Norwegian Academy of Music Chamber Choir and conductor Grete Pedersen in 2001.¹¹⁷

Text

As previously discussed, the music in many of Gjeilo's recent compositions has been the priority of his work, rather than the text. The composer, however, provides an opposite approach in *Unicornis captivatur*, having been "greatly inspired by the colorful and powerful symbolism and just the sheer drama, joy and sense of triumph that the text exudes."¹¹⁸

The text comes from the Engelberg Codex, a compilation of medieval sacred monophonic works transcribed in the late 14th century, belonging to the library of the Benedictine Abbey in Engelberg, Switzerland.¹¹⁹ Parke explains:

Unicornis captivatur is filled with rich symbolism drawn from the mediaeval bestiaries, illustrated volumes containing descriptions of both real and fabulous beasts and birds, each description accompanied by some sort of moral lesson. Bestiaries were intended as serious encyclopedias of natural history, however bizarre its creatures may seem to us and however convoluted and laboured the

¹¹⁶ Ola Gjeilo, *Unicornis captivatur*, Score. Composer's Comments.

¹¹⁷ *Unicornis captivatur* is dedicated to Grete Pedersen. Ms. Pedersen provided the work's benchmark recording with the World Youth Choir in 2003.

¹¹⁸ Ola Gjeilo, *Unicornis captivatur*, Score. Composer's Comments.

¹¹⁹ *Engelberg Codex 314*, ed. and trans. Wulf Arlt, Schweizerische Musikdenkmäler; Bd.11 (Winterthur, Schweiz: Amadeus, c1986).

moralisations. They were considered both scientific and moral authorities as late as the Elizabethan age.¹²⁰

Form, Key, Rhythm, and Meter

The free form is developed through three contrasting sections, which present the descriptive passages of text. Gjeilo provides a response at the conclusion of each of these contrasting sections by utilizing the second stanza of text.

Frequent use of key transition also helps identify the free form. The first two descriptive passages are composed in E minor, followed by the response, which begins in the same key. This response, however, quickly transitions each time to parallel E major. The third and most prolonged passage travels through numerous keys, beginning in B minor. It continues, transitioning through C-sharp minor, F-sharp minor, F-sharp major, A-flat major, before concluding back in B minor. The response again begins in E minor and transitions to E major to conclude the work.

Gjeilo appropriately sets the natural prosody of the text, which results in significant transition of meter and rhythmically complex passages. The multitude of mixed meters and asymmetrical rhythms are especially important in presenting the syllabic stresses of the text, as seen in the bass line from mm. 35-38 (Fig. 37).

¹²⁰ Parke, Kathryn. *Northern Lights; Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo*, ed. Finn S. Gundersen (Colchester, Essex C02 8HX, England: Chandos Records Ltd, 2012), 11.

B 1
Ne - ce - stra - tis mi - se - ra, Phos fe - ni - cis est ex - us - ta,

Fig. 37—“Complex Rhythm and Frequent Meter Change,” mm 35-38; *Unicornis captivatur*

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A Brief Description of the Music of *Unicornis captivatur*

Gjeilo begins the work in E minor, with a strong and melodic unison chant motive in the soprano (*divisi*) voice. This chant begins *piano* and introduces the mystical nature and dramatic intent with the first stanza of text. Although meter change is minimal to start, the flowing legato motive is presented with rhythmic intention (Fig. 38).

$\text{♩} = 116$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ *sempre*)
Soprano 1
U - ni - cor-nis cap - ti - va - tur, — Au - le — re - gum — pre - sen - ta - tur
Soprano 2
U - ni - cor-nis cap - ti - va - tur, — Au - le — re - gum — pre - sen - ta - tur

Fig. 38—“Opening Chant Sequence,” mm. 1-4; *Unicornis captivatur*

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A repeat of the opening text and chant motive continues in the upper soprano voice at m. 10. Unlike the opening, however, Gjeilo composes complex harmony in the lower soprano and alto voices to accompany the motive (Fig. 39).

10 *p*

S1 U - ni - cor - nis cap - ti - va - tur, Au - le re - gum pre - sen - ta - tur

S2 U - ni - cor - nis cap - ti - va - tur, Au - le re - gum pre - sen - ta - tur

A1 U - ni - cor - nis cap - ti - va - tur, Au - le re - gum pre - sen - ta - tur

A2 U - ni - cor - nis cap - ti - va - tur, Au - le re - gum pre - sen - ta - tur

Fig. 39—“Chant Accompanied Through Complex Harmony,” mm. 10-13; *Unicornis captivatur*

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Although similar to the opening, Gjeilo accents the text through additional rhythmic movement and frequent meter change (Fig. 40). The opening sequence and first stanza of text concludes at m. 21 in E minor, with all women’s voices arriving in unison.

14

S1
Ve - na - to - rum la - que - o, Pa - lo ser - pens est le - va - tus,

S2
Ve - na - to - rum la - que - o. — le - va - tus,

A1
Ve - na - to - rum la - que - o, Pa - lo ser - pens est le - va - tus,

A2
Ve - na - to - rum la - que - o, Pa - lo ser - pens est le - va - tus,

Fig 40—“Additional Rhythmic Intensity and Meter Change,” mm. 14-17; *Unicornis captivatur*

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Gjeilo provides a variety of musical texture in the response sequence. The ‘Alleluia’ response begins softly in the previous key of E minor before a dramatic *crescendo* to *fortissimo* transitions the sequence into E major, accentuating the joyful intentions of the text (Fig. 41).

con spirito

22

S1 *p* Al-le-lu-ia ca-ni-te. Ag-no-mo-ri-en-ti. *ff* Al-le-lu-ia.

S2 *p* Al-le-lu-ia ca-ni-te. Ag-no-mo-ri-en-ti. *ff* Al-le-lu-ia.

A1 *p* Al-le-lu-ia ca-ni-te. Ag-no-mo-ri-en-ti. *ff* Al-le-lu-ia.

A2 *p* Al-le-lu-ia ca-ni-te. Ag-no-mo-ri-en-ti. *ff* Al-le-lu-ia.

T1 *p* Al-le-lu-ia ca-ni-te. Ag-no-mo-ri-en-ti. *ff* Al-le-lu-ia.

T2 *p* Al-le-lu-ia ca-ni-te. Ag-no-mo-ri-en-ti. *ff* Al-le-lu-ia.

B1 *p* Al-le-lu-ia ca-ni-te. Ag-no-mo-ri-en-ti. *ff* Al-le-lu-ia.

B2 *p* Al-le-lu-ia ca-ni-te. Ag-no-mo-ri-en-ti. *ff* Al-le-lu-ia.

Fig. 41—“Response to Text,” mm. 22-24; *Unicornis captivatur*
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This asymmetrical sequence “sparkles like a Renaissance dance” with accented text, frequent meter change, complex rhythms, and vocal ornamentation (Fig. 42).¹²¹ The first response concludes in E major at m. 31.

¹²¹ Parke, 11. Parke refers to the musical elements to provide her description of this passage.

rhythmic contour. Quarter note motion provides for a legato presentation of the text (Fig. 43).

Fig. 43—“Lower Tessitura and Simplified Rhythm,” mm. 52-53; *Unicornis captivatur*

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A modulation ascends to C-sharp minor and begins two repetitions of the first two lines. A *crescendo* marks the final repetition of text at m. 60 as the soprano motive vocally ascends to a *fortissimo*, and the section moves briefly into F-sharp minor. A *ritard* and *decrescendo* brings the text to conclusion. Gjeilo begins to modulate keys with an added E-sharp in the alto voice, which leads into the next lines of text presented in F-sharp major.

Gjeilo introduces the next line of text through a *piano* marking and instructions to slow the tempo.¹²³ As the tenor and bass voices conclude and sustain the tonic and dominant of the new key, a contrasting and legato motive presents the next line of text in the soprano and alto voices. Similar to the opening section, the lower soprano and alto voices supply the accompanying line to the upper soprano motive. The motive concludes in m. 76, as a sustained G-sharp in the upper soprano provides the tonic for the next key transition to A-flat major (Fig. 44).



Fig. 44—“Sustained Tonic,” mm. 75-78; *Unicornis captivatur*
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The tenor and bass voices repeat the text, emulating the melodic and harmonic movement provided from the soprano and alto. Gjeilo places the motive in the upper tenor voice, as the lower tenor, baritone, and bass voices provide the accompanying support. The section continues to grow dynamically through a *poco a poco crescendo* to *mezzo forte*, as the soprano and alto voices are added for a final repeat of the text. Gjeilo prolongs the passage by repeating the text ‘*inde rediens*’ throughout all voices.¹²⁴ This particular line of text concludes on a half cadence in A-flat major at m. 98, followed by a grand pause.

¹²³ *meno mosso* (quarter note=96)

¹²⁴ ‘*inde rediens*’ translates to ‘come back alive.’

The presentation of the most expressive lines of text begins *pianissimo* following another modulation to B minor.¹²⁵ Gjeilo utilizes a multitude of dynamic markings, including *pianissimo*, *poco a poco crescendo*, *fortissimo*, *decrescendo*, and *piano*, for the third stanza of text. The text concludes in m. 106 on a B major triad.¹²⁶

The final response passage begins similar to the previous, following a simple, but brief modulation to E minor,¹²⁷ and immediate acceleration back to Tempo I.¹²⁸ For the first repeated response, dynamic markings, melodic and harmonic movement, rhythmic intensity, and frequent meter change emulate the previous responses. The soprano voice, however, presents a more active line through additional ornamentation composed in the motive. Furthermore, Gjeilo composes a complex rhythmic motive in the bass at m. 120 (Fig. 45). As the bass voices present the text on the strong beats, the remaining voices echo on the weak beats. This first response concludes in E major at m. 124, following a prolonged *crescendo* to *fortissimo*.

¹²⁵ The lower bass provides stability in the new key with a sustained pedal B.

¹²⁶ A raised third in the baritone voice solidifies the conclusion of the passage in B major.

¹²⁷ Response quickly transitions to E major, similar to the previous responses.

¹²⁸ Tempo I (quarter note=116)

Fig 45—“Surprise Rhythmic Measure,” mm. 119-121; *Unicornis captivatur*
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The final ‘Alleluia’ response begins with an identical key transition, wide dynamic variation, rhythmic intensity, and frequent meter changes. As mentioned previously, Gjeilo prolongs the phrases through a heavily ornamented ascending motive in the soprano and tenor voices (Fig. 46). This rhythmically boisterous response concludes abruptly in m. 141 with a grand pause. This allows the ensemble to prepare for the full homophonic conclusion to the work.

Fig 46—“Ornamented Ascending Motive,” mm. 133-137; *Unicornis captivatur*
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A *molto rit.* and dramatic dynamic markings (*fff*) bring the voices together for one final reiteration of ‘Alleluia’ to conclude the work. The IV-V-I chord progression in E major concludes on the sustained major triad (Fig. 47).

molto rit.

Al - le - lu - ia.
Al - le - lu - ia.
Al - le - lu - ia.
Al - le - lu - ia.
Al - le - lu - ia.
Al - le - lu - ia.
Al - le - lu - ia.
Al - le - lu - ia.

Fig 47—“Power of Conclusion,” mm. 141-143; *Unicornis captivatur*
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Additional Performance Notes

Unicornis captivatur is a challenging work that is best suited for a choir of more advanced singers. Its frequent use of *divisi* throughout requires a strong and vocally independent ensemble. The vocal ranges for the majority of the voice parts are wide,¹²⁹ requiring at times, significant flexibility in its faster passages and sheer volume in its most dramatic moments. Although the harmonic complexity of the work is not especially

¹²⁹ The range is especially high in the upper soprano and upper tenor, and low in both alto voices and lower bass.

challenging, the use of frequent meter and tempo changes, complex rhythms, and key transitions can make the work difficult.

To capture the colorful and powerful intentions of the text, Gjeilo provides dramatic dynamic variation throughout the work, which requires significant control and flexibility of vocal technique. This may be challenging for younger singers and less-experienced ensembles. Furthermore, a more focused and purer tone is ideal for the softer chant passages, which is best supported with minimal vibrato. The work, however, does present opportunities to add color through vibrato, and allows for more comfortable, relaxed, and natural singing.

Dark Night of the Soul

One dark night,
Fired with Love's urgent longings
Ah, the sheer grace!
I went out unseen,
My house being now all stilled;

In darkness, and secure,
By the secret ladder, disguised,
Ah, the sheer grace!

In darkness and concealment,
My house being now all stilled;

On that glad night,
In secret, for no one saw me,
Nor did I look at anything,
With no other light or guide
Than the one that burned in my heart.¹³⁰

Through various musical influences and the talent for creating image through music, Gjeilo's *Dark Night of the Soul* presents a symphonic "journey of the soul as it leaves its earthly prison and travels toward reunion with God."¹³¹

Composed for SATB *divisi* chorus, piano and string quartet, *Dark Night of the Soul* was commissioned by and dedicated to Walton Music Publisher Gunilla Luboff in memory of Norman Luboff.¹³² The Phoenix Chorale premiered the work in Phoenix, Arizona in February 2010. The symphonic work, with its highlighted instrumental

¹³⁰ Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross* (Washington D.C.: ICS Publications, Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1979), 295.

¹³¹ Parke, Kathryn. *Northern Lights; Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo*, ed. Finn S. Gundersen (Colchester, Essex C02 8HX, England: Chandos Records Ltd, 2012), 8.

¹³² The string quartet in *Dark Night of the Soul* is used to double the piano, the right-hand melody in the piano, or the voices throughout the entire work.

presence, cinematic approach and intriguing selection of text, has received high accolades from choral enthusiasts, directors, and audiences.

Text

The text of Gjeilo's *Dark Night of the Soul* is based on *The Ascent of Mount Carmel—The Dark Night*, a Spanish poem by St. John of the Cross, in 1581. The text was discovered and suggested to Gjeilo by The Phoenix Chorale Executive Director, Joel Rinsema. With this text, Rinsema challenged Gjeilo to expand his writing beyond the use of the Latin language, which to this point was predominant throughout his choral music.

St. John of the Cross was a founder of the Discalced Carmelites, alongside St. Teresa of Avila, and was regarded as a profound theologian, poet, and reformer. Thought of as one of the Church's greatest "Mystical Doctors,"¹³³ St. John of the Cross' writings continue to appeal to scholars and readers alike.

The Ascent of Mount Carmel—The Dark Night of 1581 is a poem that consists of eight stanzas divided into four sections. The first two stanzas of Gjeilo's musical setting of this text proclaim "the effects of the two kinds of spiritual purgation: one, a purification of the sensory part; the other, a purification of the spiritual part."¹³⁴ The third stanza, as part of the remaining six stanzas "proclaims some of the marvelous results which are obtained from the spiritual illumination and from the union with God through love."¹³⁵

¹³³ Kavanaugh, 16.

¹³⁴ Ibid. 295.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

A Brief Description of the Music of *Dark Night of the Soul*

The opening of *Dark Night of the Soul* presents Gjeilo's predilection for showcasing important roles in the instrumental lines. No longer being used solely as an accompanying force, Gjeilo places particularly strong emphasis on the piano and string quartet to introduce the work's overall dramatic intensity. Gjeilo has described this as a "reversal of forces,"¹³⁶ where the voices, despite presenting text, now play the accompanying role typically provided by instruments. Beginning in E minor, an accented, asymmetrical motive in the piano provides a dramatic introduction to the opening section (Fig. 48).¹³⁷

The image shows a musical score for the opening of 'Dark Night of the Soul'. It features five staves: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, and Piano. The vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) are in 7/8 time and marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. They all sing the word 'Dark' on a single note. The piano part is in 7/8 time and marked with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. It features a complex, accented, asymmetrical motive in the right hand, while the left hand plays a steady, rhythmic accompaniment. The tempo is indicated as ♩ = 192 (♩ = 384).

Fig. 48—"Instrumental Importance," mm. 1-4; *Dark Night of the Soul*
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The motive continues throughout the entire opening section (mm. 1-109), where overlapping dissonances between the voice and instrumental lines provide intensity to the

¹³⁶ Ola Gjeilo, interview by Ryan Garrison, Phoenix, AZ, 19 February 2013.

¹³⁷ The string quartet doubles the piano in the opening section.

work. A single soprano voice emerges above the accompanying voices and instruments in m. 53, providing a symbolic plea with the text, “I went out unseen, my house now being all stilled.” This solo, which is heard over the accompanying voices and active instrumental lines, is high in range and requires significant breath support for the sustained notes (Fig. 49).



Fig. 49—“Soprano Solo (range),” mm. 68-71; *Dark Night of the Soul*
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At the conclusion of stanza one, a sense of calmness and serenity occurs at m. 109, with an instrumental bridge and piano solo. The voices continue in the accompanying role (on a neutral syllable), while the piano introduces a new melodic motive (Fig. 50), until its conclusion at m. 130.



Fig. 50—“Piano,” mm. 109-113; *Dark Night of the Soul*
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As the work modulates to F minor, Gjeilo continues to emphasize the significant role of the piano into m. 132. Despite the unified chant-like motive in the male voices at

m. 135, a sense of intensity to the work remains with the piano’s continual eighth-note movement, heard throughout the entire presentation of stanza two (Fig. 51).



Fig. 51—“Meter and Movement of Line,” mm. 132-133; *Dark Night of the Soul*
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The instruments perform a *decrescendo* leading into m. 156. Combined with the voices singing *pianissimo* in the accompanying role, the soprano solo re-enters at m. 158, and presents a new melodic motive. The repetition of the text “Ah, the sheer grace!” in a sustained legato manner allows for the high-ranged soprano solo to penetrate the accompaniment sufficiently. The solo ends at m. 168, joining the voices in the conclusion of stanza two: “my house being now all stilled.” The work builds in intensity in mm. 173-174 with a two-bar *crescendo*. This subsequently leads to the climax and is the dramatic section of the work.

Gjeilo continues to emphasize the poem’s line, “Ah, the sheer grace,” as the work moves into m. 175. This section illustrates film music’s distinctive influence on Gjeilo, with a cinematic approach toward the climax through transitioning meters, ascending keys, and dramatic dynamic contrast. He creates intensity through full harmony in the voices, and within the rhythmic complexity of the piano (Fig. 52). The dramatic urgency and climax of section two concludes at m. 190 with a *decrescendo* over two measures, providing another sense of calm and conclusion to the text.

The image displays a musical score for measures 186 and 187 of 'Dark Night of the Soul'. It includes four vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a piano accompaniment. The vocal parts are marked with 'grace!' and 'Ah,' and feature long, sustained notes. The piano part is highly rhythmic and complex, featuring intricate patterns in both hands.

Fig. 52—"Rhythmic Complexity of Piano," mm. 186-187; *Dark Night of the Soul*
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The significant role of the piano continues following the concluding middle section with a solo that transitions into the next verse from mm. 192-199.¹³⁸ An introduction to stanza three begins at m. 200, where Gjeilo again places the voices in an accompanying role, on neutral syllables, as the piano features another rhythmically complex and melodic motive (Fig. 53).

¹³⁸ This solo transition will be the focus on the importance of the piano, discussed in the additional performance notes for *Dark Night of the Soul*.

The image shows a musical score for four vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a Piano accompaniment. The vocal parts are in 7/4 time and feature the syllable "Ooh". The piano part is in 7/4 time and features a "Duple/Triple Motive" with triplets. The score is marked "a tempo" and "pp" (pianissimo) for the vocal parts, and "p" (piano) for the piano part. The score is numbered 204.

Fig. 53—“Duple/Triple Motive in Piano and Use of Neutral Syllable in Choir,” mm. 204-205; *Dark Night of the Soul*

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The text of stanza three is introduced at m. 208, transitioning to A minor, for the works first and only *a cappella* section. With consideration to the text “On that glad night, in secret, for no one saw me,” Gjeilo composes for the calm and serenity in this literary passage, appropriately described by Kavanaugh:

Although the soul in its progress has not the support of any particular, interior light of the intellect or of any exterior guide that may give it satisfaction on this lofty path—since these dense darknesses have deprived it of all satisfaction—love alone, which at this period burns by soliciting the heart for the Beloved, is what guides and moves it and makes it soar to God in an unknown way along the road of solitude.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ Kavanaugh, 389.

The *a cappella* section is brief. The soprano solo re-enters briefly in m. 216 followed by the piano. The solo releases with the accompanying voices at m. 217, and the piano brings the section to a cadence with a pause at m. 220. A recapitulation of the opening material begins at m. 221, continuing the text of stanza three. The rhythmic motive from the beginning returns following another modulation to the opening key of E minor, allowing for the piano and string quartet to emphasize the accented, asymmetrical motive accompanied by the voices. The conclusion of the text is given simultaneously to all voice parts with a rhythmic reiteration of “Ah, the sheer grace” (Fig. 54).

Fig. 54—“Return of Rhythmic Motive,” mm. 229-231; *Dark Night of Soul*
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The asymmetrical motive from mm. 221-313, combined with accented rhythms, continual dissonance and resolution, and expressive dynamics, all set the scene for a final sense of intensity. An abrupt *pianissimo* brings this passage to conclusion at m. 313, where the voices, now homophonic, present the final text “dark night of the soul.” Arpeggiated sixteenth-note patterns in the piano continue to provide a driving force toward the conclusion (Fig. 55).

The musical score for Figure 55 consists of five staves. The top four staves are for the vocal parts: Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor (T.), and Bass (B.). Each vocal part has the lyrics "Dark Night of the" written below the notes. The Soprano, Tenor, and Bass parts have a melodic line with a slur over the first two notes of each phrase. The Alto part has a more static accompaniment. The fifth staff is for the Piano (Pno.), which features a driving arpeggiated sixteenth-note pattern in both hands. The tempo is marked "a tempo" at the beginning of the piano part.

Fig. 55—“Rhythmic Movement in Piano,” mm. 318-319; *Dark Night of the Soul*
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The resolution of dissonance creates a serene and peaceful conclusion at “On that glad night, here the Dark Night ending.”¹⁴⁰ Gjeilo combines a lyrical piano motive from

¹⁴⁰ Kavanaugh, 389.

m. 322 to the end with voices that *decrecendo* to *pianissimo* on a sustained neutral syllable.

Additional Performance Notes

Gjeilo's *Dark Night of the Soul*, in its symphonic nature, takes a significant leap beyond choral music's traditional and standard repertoire. Its cinematic approach and intriguing text, present an opportunity for variety in concert programming.¹⁴¹

A difficult, but accessible work, *Dark Night of the Soul's* full *divisi* may seem more appropriate for larger ensembles; however, a smaller ensemble of trained voices may prove just as adequate, if not more so. Challenges may arise in the work's larger vocal ranges, constant rhythmic motion, and vocal releases, which are particularly challenging in rhythmic passages of the opening and closing sections.¹⁴² Additionally, the high range of the soprano solo and a multitude of key changes can prove particularly daunting.

An accomplished pianist, Gjeilo composed *Dark Night of the Soul* with the full intention of highlighting the role of the piano. No longer being utilized as mere

¹⁴¹ Ola Gjeilo, interview by Ryan Garrison, Phoenix, AZ, 19 February 2013. In Gjeilo's more recent compositions, a cinematic approach is best identified with the role of the performing forces. Similar to film music, Gjeilo frequently places the voices in the accompanying role on neutral vowel with simple meter, allowing the rhythmically complex and melodic instrumental lines to be especially highlighted. This 'non-diegetic' or 'non-literal' sound plays the significant role in creating the atmosphere and mood within a film. This is the sound that appears from a source outside the story space, or in this case, the text of the music.

¹⁴² The soprano solo extends to a B₅, often sustained significantly. The lower bass continually sustains D₂ and E-flat₂ throughout. The remaining inside voices and ranges are accessible.

accompaniment, the piano sets the drama of the work and text heard in the asymmetric opening and closing sections, and metrically complex solo bridges and passages, which may be difficult for an amateur pianist (Fig. 56).

193

Pno.

196

Pno.

198

Pno.

$\text{♩} = 86$

Pia

p

Pia

Pia

Fig. 56—“Piano Solo and Importance of Strong Player,” mm. 193-199; *Dark Night of the Soul*

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CHAPTER FOUR

INTERPRETATION AND RECORDING:

NORTHERN LIGHTS: CHORAL WORKS BY OLA GJEILO

As is the case with any performance, the artistic interpretation of music varies from conductor to conductor. This section discusses specific interpretive choices that conductors Charles Bruffy and Joel Rinsema made in producing The Phoenix Chorale's recording of Gjeilo's music, followed by a glance into the early developments of the recording project.

Interpretation of *Dark Night of the Soul*, *Evening Prayer*, and *The Ground*

These three works presented minimal opportunity for conductor interpretation, especially with Gjeilo leading the ensemble from the piano. The composer provides extremely detailed markings in each piece, which Bruffy applied in recording these works.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, these three pieces emphasize the important roles of the instruments. Since the piano is a main priority, the conductors and producers determined that removing the piano lid would allow for the piano to provide a brighter, more articulate presence. This brighter quality was effective in achieving the more dramatic intensions of the music. Furthermore, this allowed for legato solo sections to be more present over the accompanying voices.

In *Dark Night of the Soul*, Bruffy suggested that the string quartet play *marcato* or more "off the string, to provide a louder, more forceful, and intense rhythmic thrust

toward the dramatic opening—to match the intensity of the piano (Fig 57).”¹⁴³ The adjustment was effective in showcasing the instruments throughout the work.



Fig. 57—“Rhythm Intensity of Piano/Doubled Strings,” mm.1-4; *Dark Night of the Soul*
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Gjeilo and Ted Belledin initially took on the conductor’s role for *Evening Prayer*, performing the improvised instrumental motives. In the early recording stages, Bruffy had insisted on not conducting the work, with Gjeilo and Belledin controlling the overall movement and tempo. Eventually, however, the performing forces insisted that Bruffy provide stability in presence and gesture toward unifying tempo, phrasing, and releases with the instruments.¹⁴⁴

In *The Ground*, Gjeilo and Bruffy collaborated closely to guide the ensemble through numerous musical and textual transitions. Although Gjeilo provides many essential markings (*poco rit.*, *rit.*) throughout, not every phrase ending had these instructions. Bruffy utilized the *crescendo* and *decrescendo* to slightly and briefly stretch each conclusion before transitioning into the next musical phrase.

¹⁴³ Charles Bruffy, interview, 27 February 2013. The string quartet doubles the piano.

¹⁴⁴ The singers of the ensemble and the instrumentalists preferred Mr. Bruffy leading the ensemble.

Interpretation of *Phoenix (Agnus Dei)*

Bruffy's interpretation of *Phoenix (Agnus Dei)* provided intensity to the composer's visual intentions in the work. Adhering to Gjeilo's expressive dynamics, Bruffy took liberties with tempo by utilizing the marked *crescendo* or *decrescendo* to stretch phrases, which either continued into other phrases, or cadenced.¹⁴⁵ This concept brought out the strongest aspect of Gjeilo's writing. Rinsema explains:

Ola has a good sense of phrasing and voice leading in all vocal lines. All of his works have a strong introduction, climax, and ending. His transitions (harmonic and melodic) are thoughtfully written, and create a sense of drama within the piece.¹⁴⁶

Although not included in the score, Bruffy suggested the upper tenor join the soprano in m. 46,¹⁴⁷ to provide additional color of tone to the motive. This provided variation from the first response and began the initial climax to the work. The upper tenor voice remained on the motive until m. 50, before returning to its *divisi* line in m. 51.

Interpretation of *Prelude, Northern Lights, Tota pulchra es, Ubi caritas* and *Unicornis captivatur*

Bruffy utilizes similar interpretive approaches to each of these works' complex harmonies and descriptive Latin texts by stretching the tempo to mold phrases together. By placing particular emphasis on text and text movement, Bruffy eliminates the concern

¹⁴⁵ Bruffy particularly applied this concept in mm. 35-36, mm. 39-40, and mm. 70-71.

¹⁴⁶ Rinsema, interview, 2013.

¹⁴⁷ In the original score, the upper tenor eventually joins the soprano motive, but not until m. 56.

with meter and meter transition. This interpretation is applied to the slower and legato chant-like passages in each work.¹⁴⁸

In *Prelude*, Bruffy's interpretation of Gjeilo's beginning instructions, "with great force and joy,"¹⁴⁹ is taken literally. With the opening and closing movement's "joyful and celebratory"¹⁵⁰ motive, Bruffy's tempo exceeds the composer's marking. Rinsema explains Bruffy's organic approach exploring the character of the work:

In early performances of *Prelude*, Bruffy's interpretation of the work was more aggressive and strident. Particularly catching his ear was the medieval-like organum presented through the drone. He had the singers accentuate the drone through a more brassy and nasal tone. Although this was not intended by the composer, the approach was still affective.¹⁵¹

During the recording sessions, Gjeilo insisted on an additional low F-sharp₂ and C-sharp₃ drone in the lower bass voices to provide more of a foundation.¹⁵² This allowed for a sense of arrival to the conclusion following the middle sequence.

In *Northern Lights*, Bruffy placed significant emphasis on the role of the accompanying voices from mm. 21-35. Although Gjeilo composed each release on the third beat, Bruffy either shortened or extended each release to "clear a way for other harmonies and place more emphasis on the text in the motive."¹⁵³ The first release is

¹⁴⁸ This interpretation was especially applied in *Ubi caritas* and *Tota pulchra es*.

¹⁴⁹ Gjeilo, *Prelude*, score. Composer's Comments.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Rinsema, interview, 2013.

¹⁵² Gjeilo, interview, 13 February 2013.

¹⁵³ Bruffy, interview, 2013.

placed near the off-beat of two; the second on the off-beat of three; and the final on the originally intended beat three release (Fig. 58).

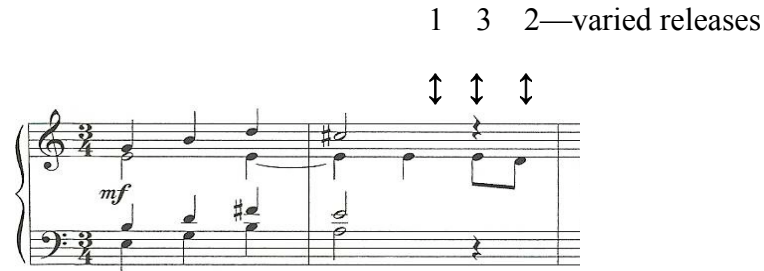


Fig 58—“Variety in Releases,” mm. 30-31; *Northern Lights*
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In *Unicornis captivatur*, Bruffy creates additional intensity toward the descriptive text by having the ensemble sing multiple phrases without organized breath. This is especially effective in mm. 52-65 and mm. 66-93. In measures where breathing opportunities would be typical, Bruffy provides a slight *crescendo*, “to drive the intensity of the text and harmonic movement forward.”¹⁵⁴

Interpretation of *Serenity* and *The Spheres*

Gjeilo utilizes an overlapping fade-in/fade-out effect to achieve a visual component in *Serenity* and *The Spheres*. In *Serenity*, this technique is applied between the solo cello and accompanying voices in the opening and closing sections. Gjeilo applies the same technique between the voices in the opening section of *The Spheres*.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

In both works, Bruffy takes significant liberties with tempo by stretching the overlapping chords between each voice entrance. Rather than focusing on a precise meter throughout, Bruffy extends the phrases by having each voice enter when cued. Combined with Gjeilo’s dynamic markings, the intended imagery is achieved.

In *Serenity*, Bruffy’s relaxed sense of tempo is immediately established in the opening measures. Rather than strictly adhering to the length of each sustained note and releasing on the intended rest, he utilizes the *decrescendo* to “extend and prolong the accompanying ‘echo effect,’”¹⁵⁵ into the second half of the measure. This also allows for an appropriate give and take between the solo cello and voices (Fig. 59).

↕-extended *decrescendo* to release

The figure displays a musical score for measures 22 and 23 of the piece *Serenity*. It features five staves: Violoncello (Vc.), Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The Vc. staff begins at measure 22 with a long note that has a decrescendo hairpin. The vocal staves (S, A, T, B) have notes with 'num' markings and decrescendo hairpins. A double-headed arrow points to the Vc. staff with the text '↕-extended decrescendo to release'.

Fig. 59—“Extended Release,” mm. 22-23; *Serenity*
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¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

Bruffy applies the same concept in *The Spheres*, having the voices extend briefly into the next measure of rest. This allows for a continued overflow of sound between each of the voice lines (Fig. 60).

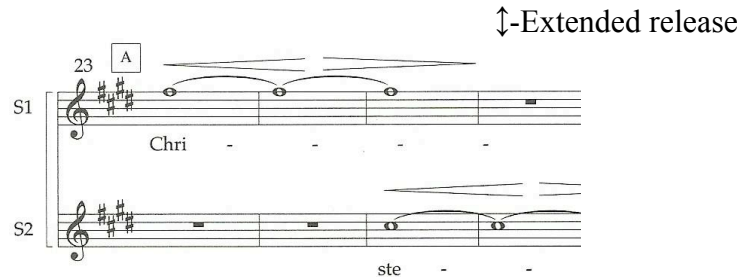


Fig. 60—“Voices Extended Release,” mm. 23-26; *The Spheres*
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The Recording

From 2009-2010, during Gjeilo’s tenure as composer-in-residence, The Phoenix Chorale either performed or premiered music of the composer in each of its four themed concerts. The response was immediate, appealing to a significantly broad range of audiences and singers.¹⁵⁶

Shortly thereafter, Joel Rinsema provided archival recordings of the early performances to Blanton Alspaugh and Ralph Couzens.¹⁵⁷ The two were aware of the popularity of Gjeilo’s music and concluded a recording would be truly warranted.

Rinsema explains:

¹⁵⁶ As a performer involved in premiering Gjeilo’s music, I recall the abundance of enthusiasm from interacting with audience members following numerous performances. These performances were given to choral scholars, performers, and general enthusiasts.

¹⁵⁷ Mr. Rinsema played a significant role in the overall development of *Northern Lights: Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo*. Mr. Rinsema also provided valuable artistic insight while working closely with Mr. Bruffy.

Our record label, Chandos, encouraged us to record a CD of a young, relatively unknown but quality composer. They knew of the success of the Whitacre and Lauridsen discs on other labels, and wanted the kind of commercial success that those experienced. Also, we felt the repertoire fit the [Phoenix] Chorale's sound perfectly—repertoire that Charles [Bruffy] could apply significant artistic interpretation and insight. Gjeilo's attention to beautiful melodies, and sensitive choral writing were very appealing to us, and we knew that it would appeal to a broader audience. To put it simply: this recording would share with the world a new voice in choral music that celebrates the musical and compositional styles and traditions of the past, while at the same time bringing new harmonies, textures, and styles of the next generation of choral composition.¹⁵⁸

The recording presented the opportunity to collaborate closely with a living composer. Although Bruffy essentially had the final say in the interpretation and presentation of the music, it was unique to have the opportunity to investigate and explore the artistic possibilities of each piece with the composer present.¹⁵⁹ Bruffy, Rinsema, and the team of producers spent considerable time deciding which of Gjeilo's music would be performed on the recording. Rinsema explains:

We wanted to perform and record an overview of Gjeilo's works. He is a young and gifted composer who has only been writing [quality] choral music since the early 2000's, but in that time span, his compositional style has already shown quite a bit of diversity. *Ubi caritas* and *Unicornis captivatur* are examples of some of his early works that are more traditional and conventional in approach to melody and line, whereas *The Spheres* and *Dark Night of the Soul* are more minimalistic works, while still retaining melodic integrity. We felt that if we were presenting this album to the world as a fair representation of his first twelve years of serious compositional output, that we needed to show that diversity.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Joel Rinsema, interview by Ryan Garrison, 27 February 2013, Phoenix, AZ, home of Joel Rinsema.

¹⁵⁹ Gjeilo was present for the entire recording process, and his role at the piano in *Dark Night of the Soul* and *Evening Prayer* was essential toward the interpretation of those pieces.

¹⁶⁰ Rinsema, interview, 2013.

Northern Lights: Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo has had more popular success than any prior recording by The Phoenix Chorale, particularly with new and younger listeners and audiences.¹⁶¹ “Many have agreed on the recording’s high quality of performance, and the appeal Gjeilo’s works have had to a broader public.”¹⁶² James Unger, a fan of the album, provides his impressions on Amazon via his personal blog site, stating:

If you are a fan of choral harmonies and deeply emotional, absolutely breathtaking sounds, than this recording is a must have! I was simply mesmerized by the tranquil harmonic beauty—it really caught me off guard. Fans of movie soundtracks, classical choral and symphonic works will adore this album!¹⁶³

Marcus DiBenedetto, provided his impressions of the disc in his blog:

This choral work is breathtaking—The Phoenix Chorale does a superb performance. Each track has its “cathedral” overtones, as a “new age” aspect weaves its way throughout the music. The engineering is excellent and makes use of your entire surround sound.¹⁶⁴

The enthusiastic responses from younger and newer listeners of choral music (similar to those above) continue to have an appeal with Gjeilo’s ability to infuse multiple music styles in his compositions. His jazz oriented and cinematic approach to recent

¹⁶¹ The recording has had significant online success with high-customer rankings on iTunes and Classical Billboard.

¹⁶² Rinsema, interview, 2013.

¹⁶³ James Unger, comment on “Northern Lights: Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo,” The Albums You Just Gotta Hear Blog, comment posted January 17, 2013, <http://albumsyoujustgottahear.blogspot.ca/> (assessed April 11, 2013).

¹⁶⁴ Marcus DiBenedetto, comment on “Northern Lights: Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo,” HD Music Catalog Blog, comment posted April 3, 2013, http://marcusandlamona.com/L&M_MC082612/df668b6f.html (assessed April 13, 2013).

works has been described as “pleasing to the ear and comforting to the soul,”¹⁶⁵ with their strong melodic motives, complex harmonies, and the unique roles in the instruments. Gjeilo continues to generate interest from a broad range of audiences by composing with this approach.

The accessibility of Gjeilo’s earliest music, such as *Ubi caritas* and *Prelude*, continues to present opportunities for growth for various levels of ensembles. Younger and less experienced ensembles have found these work’s traditional melodies combined with modern harmonies most appealing. More importantly, these works provide the tools to introduce aspects of choral singing, which include performing *a cappella* music (choral blend in the ensemble), a historical approach to varying styles, and an introduction to vocal techniques (vocal pedagogy).

With the release of this recording by the Grammy-award winning Phoenix Chorale, produced and released on Chandos, the world’s largest independent classical record label—has made Ola Gjeilo’s music more accessible to potential listeners, including those in the younger generation. Only time will tell how Gjeilo’s music will be received by future generations. Based on my experience preparing, performing, and conducting Gjeilo’s music, in addition to the commercial and popular success of this recording, I believe that Ola Gjeilo will be recognized as one of the prominent choral composers of the early 21st Century.

¹⁶⁵ James Thorson, comment on “Northern Lights: Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo,” comment posted March 28, 2013, http://www.amazon.com/gp/aw/cr/B006O51CF2/ref=mw_dp_cr (accessed April 13, 2013).

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APPENDIX A

PUBLISHED CHORAL WORKS BY OLA GJEILO

Choral Works

TITLE: Away in a Manger (arr.)
TEXT SOURCE: Anon.
LANGUAGE: English
PUBLISHER: Walton Music
DATE OF PUBLICATION: 2012
CATALOG NUMBER: 10304767
UPC: 884088657208
PUBLISHER ID: 08501835
VOICING: SATB *a cappella*
LEVEL: Easy/Medium
DURATION: 4:30
INSTRUMENTS: None
NOTES: Original melody by William J. Kirkpatrick. Separate octavo included from Christmas Carols vol. 2.
RECORDINGS: Tora Augestad/Nova Chamber Choir at www.olagjeilo.com

TITLE: Christmas Carols vol. 1
TEXT SOURCE:
LANGUAGE: English
PUBLISHER: Walton Music
DATE OF PUBLICATION: 2012
PUBLISHER CODE: WW1487
VOICING: SSAATTBB *a cappella*
LEVEL: Advanced
DURATION: 14:00
INSTRUMENTS: None
NOTES: 3 of 7 Christmas carol arrangements commissioned for Nova Chamber Choir's *To Whom We Sing* Christmas CD. Included songs: *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*, *In the Bleak Midwinter*, *God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen*. All works required use of double choir.
RECORDINGS: Recording excerpts at www.olagjeilo.com
O Come, O Come, Emmanuel—The Phoenix Chorale
In the Bleak Midwinter—Nova Chamber Choir
God Rest You Merry Gentlemen—The Phoenix Chorale

TITLE: Christmas Carols vol. 2
TEXT SOURCE:
LANGUAGE: English
PUBLISHER: Walton Music DATE OF PUBLICATION: 2012
PUBLISHER CODE: WW1488
VOICING: SATB *a cappella* LEVEL: Advanced
DURATION: 16:00
INSTRUMENTS: None
NOTES: 4 of 7 Christmas carol arrangements commissioned for Nova Chamber Choir's *To Whom We Sing* Christmas CD. Included songs: *Away in a Manger*, *The Holly and the Ivy*, *Coventry Carol*, *The First Nowell*.
RECORDINGS: All recording excerpts at www.olagjeilo.com
Away in a Manger—Tora Augestad/Nova Chamber Choir
The Holly and the Ivy—The Phoenix Chorale
Coventry Carol—The Phoenix Chorale
The First Nowell—Alison Chaney/The Phoenix Chorale

TITLE: Dark Night of the Soul (1579-1581)
TEXT SOURCE: St. John of the Cross
LANGUAGE: Spanish poem translated in English
PUBLISHER: Walton Music DATE OF PUBLICATION: 2011
CATALOG NUMBER: 10278640
UPC: 884088580544
PUBLISHER ID: 08501791
VOICING: SSAATTBB LEVEL: Advanced
DURATION: 14:00
INSTRUMENTS: Piano and String Quartet
NOTES:
RECORDINGS: The Phoenix Chorale—
Northern Lights: Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo
The Phoenix Chorale at www.olagjeilo.com

TITLE: Evening Prayer
TEXT SOURCE: St. Augustine of Hippo (attributed)
LANGUAGE: English
PUBLISHER: Not available DATE OF PUBLICATION: Not available
VOICING: SATB LEVEL: Medium
DURATION: 6:00
INSTRUMENTS: Piano, Tenor Saxophone
NOTES: currently not available for sale
RECORDINGS: The Phoenix Chorale—
Northern Lights: Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo

TITLE: Gloria
TEXT SOURCE: Anon.
LANGUAGE: Latin
PUBLISHER: Walton Music
DATE OF PUBLICATION:
CATALOG NUMBER: 10067365
UPC: 884088313159
PUBLISHER ID: 08501690
VOICING: SSAA
LEVEL: Medium/Advanced
DURATION: 3:25
INSTRUMENTS: Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, 2 Horns, Timpani, and String
Orchestra. Four-hand accompaniment.
NOTES: Commissioned for St. Olaf Christmas Festival
RECORDINGS: St. Olaf Manitou Singers and Orchestra at www.olagjeilo.com

TITLE: The Ground
TEXT SOURCE: Anon.
LANGUAGE: Latin
PUBLISHER: Walton Music
DATE OF PUBLICATION: 2010
CATALOG NUMBER: 10276430
UPC: 884088552435
PUBLISHER ID: 08501774
VOICING: SATB
LEVEL: Easy/Medium
DURATION: 3:30
INSTRUMENTS: Piano and optional string quartet
NOTES: Extracted from *Sunrise Mass*
RECORDINGS: The Phoenix Chorale—
Northern Lights: Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo
Central Washington University Chamber Choir at
www.olagjeilo.com

TITLE: Holly and the Ivy (arr.)
TEXT SOURCE: Anon.
LANGUAGE: English
PUBLISHER: Walton Music
DATE OF PUBLICATION: 2012
CATALOG NUMBER: 10304829
UPC: 884088657482
PUBLISHER ID: 08501836
VOICING: SATB *a cappella*
LEVEL: Medium
DURATION: 3:30
INSTRUMENTS: NONE
NOTES: Separate octavo. Included in *Christmas Carols, Vol. 2.*
RECORDINGS: The Phoenix Chorale at www.olagjeilo.com

TITLE: Luminous Night of the Soul
TEXT SOURCE: Charles Anthony Silvestri/St. John of the Cross
LANGUAGE: English
PUBLISHER: Walton Music DATE OF PUBLICATION: 2012
CATALOG NUMBER: 10304832
UPC: 884088657604
PUBLISHER ID: 08501837
VOICING: SATB LEVEL: Advanced
DURATION: 9:00
INSTRUMENTS: Piano and String Quartet
NOTES: Sequel to *Dark Night of the Soul*, but may be performed separately.
RECORDINGS: Cantare Houston with Ola Gjeilo at www.olagjeilo.com

TITLE: Northern Lights
TEXT SOURCE: Anon. Text from *Song of Solomon*
LANGUAGE: Latin
PUBLISHER: Walton Music DATE OF PUBLICATION: 2008
CATALOG NUMBER: 10090831
UPC: 884088493615
PUBLISHER ID: 08501748
VOICING: SATB *a cappella* LEVEL: Medium
DURATION: 4:35
INSTRUMENTS: None
NOTES: Music inspired by the aurora borealis atmospheric lights.
RECORDINGS: The Phoenix Chorale at www.olagjeilo.com—
Northern Lights: Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo

TITLE: Phoenix
TEXT SOURCE: Agnus Dei
LANGUAGE: Latin
PUBLISHER: Walton Music DATE OF PUBLICATION: 2008
INVENTORY #HL 08501749
UPC: 884088493622
PUBLISHER CODE: WW1446
VOICING: SSAATTBB *a cappella* LEVEL: Advanced
DURATION: 5:30
INSTRUMENTS: None
NOTES: Inspired by Phoenix and the Arizona desert.
RECORDINGS: The Phoenix Chorale—
Northern Lights: Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo
Sofia Vokalensemble at www.olagjeilo.com

TITLE: Prelude
TEXT SOURCE: Exsultate, Jubilate
LANGUAGE: Latin
PUBLISHER: Walton Music DATE OF PUBLICATION: 2004
CATALOG NUMBER: 10027661
UPC: 884088144715
PUBLISHER ID: 08501649
VOICING: SATB *a cappella* LEVEL: Moderate
DURATION: 3:30
INSTRUMENTS: None
NOTES: Great concert opener and closer.
RECORDINGS: The Phoenix Chorale—
 Northern Lights: Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo
 Sofia Vokalensemble at www.olagjeilo.com
 University of Houston Concert Chorale at www.olagjeilo.com

TITLE: Sanctus
TEXT SOURCE: Anon.
LANGUAGE: Latin
PUBLISHER: Walton Music DATE OF PUBLICATION:
CATALOG NUMBER: 10046163
UPC: 884088223397
PUBLISHER ID: 08501675
VOICING: SATB *a cappella* LEVEL: Advanced
DURATION: 4:30
INSTRUMENTS: None
NOTES:
RECORDINGS: Uranienborg Vokalensemble at www.olagjeilo.com

TITLE: Second Eve
TEXT SOURCE: Sancta Maria
LANGUAGE: Latin
PUBLISHER: Edition Peters (PE.P72296) DATE OF PUBLICATION: 2013
VOICING: SSAATTBB divisi *a cappella*
DURATION: 6:00 LEVEL: Moderate/Advanced
INSTRUMENTS: None
NOTES: Inspired through photography by Jake Rajs, in the book *These United States*.
Second Eve was commissioned by, dedicated to, and later premiered by the Riverside
City College Chamber Choir and conductor John Byun in Riverside, California, Oct.
2008.
RECORDINGS: The Phoenix Chorale at www.olagjeilo.com

TITLE: Serenity
TEXT SOURCE: O magnum mysterium
LANGUAGE: Latin
PUBLISHER: Walton Music DATE OF PUBLICATION: 2010
CATALOG NUMBER: 10304873
UPC: 884088641290
PUBLISHER ID: 08501809
VOICING: SSAATTBB LEVEL: Advanced
DURATION: 6:00
INSTRUMENTS: Violin or Cello
NOTES: Instrument utilized in opening and closing. Middle section is a cappella for choir.
RECORDINGS: The Phoenix Chorale—
 Northern Lights: Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo
 Sofia Vokalensemble at www.olagjeilo.com

TITLE: The Spheres
TEXT SOURCE: Kyrie
LANGUAGE: Latin
PUBLISHER: Walton Music DATE OF PUBLICATION: 2008
CATALOG NUMBER 10088077
UPC: 884088475710
PUBLISHER ID: 08501725
VOICING: SATB divisi *a cappella* LEVEL: Advanced
DURATION: 5:30
INSTRUMENTS: None
NOTES: A cappella arrangement from beginning of *Sunrise Mass*
RECORDINGS: The Phoenix Chorale—
 Northern Lights: Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo
 The Phoenix Chorale at www.olagjeilo.com

TITLE: Sunrise Mass
TEXT SOURCE: Latin Mass
LANGUAGE: Latin
PUBLISHER: Walton Music DATE OF PUBLICATION:
CATALOG NUMBER: 10304081
UPC: 884088650643
PUBLISHER ID: 08501827
VOICING: SSAATTBB LEVEL: Advanced
DURATION: 32:00
INSTRUMENTS: String orchestra
NOTES: Symphonic Mass
RECORDINGS: Excerpts at www.olagjeilo.com

TITLE: Tota pulchra es
TEXT SOURCE: Anon.
LANGUAGE: Latin
PUBLISHER: Walton Music
INVENTORY #HL 08501700
UPC: 884088324971
PUBLISHER CODE: WW1417
VOICING: SATB *a cappella*
DURATION: 6:30
INSTRUMENTS: None
NOTES:
RECORDINGS: The Phoenix Chorale—
Northern Lights: Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo
Sacred North (Exlibris) Mogens Dahl Chamber Choir at
www.olageilo.com

TITLE: Tundra
TEXT SOURCE: Charles A. Silvestri
LANGUAGE: English
PUBLISHER: Walton Music
CATALOG NUMBER: 10276418
UPC: 884088549275
PUBLISHER ID: 08501772
VOICING: SSAA
DURATION: 3:30
INSTRUMENTS: Piano and optional string quartet
NOTES: American Choral Directors Association Women's National Honor Choir
consort, Chicago, Illinois.
RECORDINGS: University of Mississippi "Ole Miss" Glee at
www.olageilo.com

TITLE: Ubi caritas
TEXT SOURCE: Anon.
LANGUAGE: Latin
PUBLISHER: Walton Music
CATALOG NUMBER: 10025943
UPC: 884088141134
PUBLISHER ID: 08501631
VOICING: SATB *a cappella*
 SSAA *a cappella*
 TTBB *a cappella*
DURATION: 3:00
INSTRUMENTS: None
NOTES: Accessible to good high school choirs.
RECORDINGS: The Phoenix Chorale—
 Northern Lights: Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo
 Central Washington University Chamber choir at
 www.olagjeilo.com

TITLE: Unicornis captivatur
TEXT SOURCE: Anon.
LANGUAGE: Latin
PUBLISHER: Walton Music
CATALOG NUMBER: 10046197
UPC: 884088223502
PUBLISHER ID: 08501679
VOICING: SATB *a cappella*
DURATION: 7:00
INSTRUMENTS: None
NOTES: Text from Medieval Latin poetry
RECORDINGS: “The Phoenix Chorale—
 Northern Lights: Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo
 World Youth Choir at www.olagjeilo.com

APPENDIX B
COPYRIGHT AND PERMISSION

--- On Tue, 11/20/12, Bynumite@aol.com <Bynumite@aol.com> wrote:

From: Bynumite@aol.com <Bynumite@aol.com>

Subject: Re: Project completion--Ryan Garrison

To: rgarrison01@yahoo.com

Date: Tuesday, November 20, 2012, 1:17 PM

Dear Ryan,

Forgive me for my silence! This is totally my fault and my apologies are very sincere!

We are in the midst of production here and I lost track of your request.

You hereby have Walton's permission to include music excerpts in your dissertation material (I find the Figures most interesting - thanks for including them!).

Good luck with your dissertation!

All best,

Gunilla Luboff

Gunilla Luboff, publisher

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Friday, March 8, 2013 12:21 AM

Dear Ryan,

I hereby give you permission to use material from my unpublished score *Evening Prayer* for your dissertation.

All best,
Ola Gjeilo.

On Wed, Mar 6, 2013 at 8:55 PM, Ryan Garrison <rgarrison01@yahoo.com> wrote:

Good evening, Ola.

Since *Evening Prayer* is not yet published, I will need your permission to use the few figures I present in the document.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to let me know.

Hope your travels are going well! ;)

Thanks,
Ryan

--

www.olagjeilo.com
www.facebook.com/ola.gjeilo
www.youtube.com/olagjeilo

Atlanta, GA



Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

To: Kay Norton
MUSIC BUIL

From: *jr* Mark Roosa, Chair *mr*
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Study Title: "A Selection of Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo for SATB Choir: Composition, Interpretation, and Record
Chorale's Northern Lights"

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