

Program

Nov - 2016

The Star Spangled Banner.....Francis Scott Key

From Sea to Shining Sea.....arr. by Alan Billingsley

The Testament of Freedom

A Setting of Four Passages from the Writings of Thomas Jefferson
by Randall Thompson

I - The God Who Gave Us Life

The God who gave us life gave us liberty at the same time; the hand of force may destroy but cannot disjoin them.

—*A Summary View of the Rights of British America (1774)*

II - We Have Counted The Cost

We have counted the cost of this contest, and find nothing so dreadful as voluntary slavery. Honor, justice, and humanity forbid us tamely to surrender that freedom which we received from our gallant ancestors, and which our innocent posterity have a right to receive from us. We cannot endure the infamy and guilt of resigning succeeding generations to that wretchedness which inevitably awaits them if we basely entail hereditary bondage upon them.

Our cause is just. Our union is perfect. Our internal resources are great... We gratefully acknowledge, as signal instances of the Divine favor towards us, that His Providence would not permit us to be called into this severe controversy until we were grown up to our present strength, had been previously exercised in warlike operation, and possessed of the means of defending ourselves. With hearts fortified with these animating reflections, we most solemnly, before God and the world, declare that, exerting the utmost energy of those powers which our beneficent Creator hath graciously bestowed upon us, the arms we have been compelled by our enemies to assume we will, in defiance of every hazard, with unabating firmness and perseverance, employ for the preservation of our liberties; being with one mind resolved to die freemen rather than to live slave.

—*Declaration of Causes and Necessity of Taking up Arms (July 6, 1775)*

III - We Fight Not For Glory

We fight not for glory or for conquest. We exhibit to mankind the remarkable spectacle of a people attacked by unprovoked enemies, without any imputation or even suspicion of offense. They boast of their privileges and civilization, and yet proffer no milder conditions than servitude or death.

In our native land, in defense of the freedom that is our birthright and which we ever enjoyed till the late violation of it; for the protection of our property, acquired solely by the honest industry of our forefathers and ourselves; against violence actually offered; we have taken up arms. We shall lay them down when hostilities shall cease on the part of the aggressors and all danger of their being renewed shall be removed, and not before.

—*Declaration of Causes and Necessity of Taking up Arms (July 6, 1775)*

IV - I Shall Not Die Without a Hope

I shall not die without a hope that light and liberty are on steady advance... And even should the cloud of barbarism and despotism again obscure the science and liberties of Europe, this country remains to preserve and restore light and liberty to them...The flames kindled on the 4th of July, 1776, have spread over too much of the globe to be extinguished by the feeble engines of despotism; on the contrary, they will consume these engines and all who work them.

—*Letter to John Adams, Monticello (September 12, 1821)*

The God who gave us life gave us liberty at the same time; the hand of force may destroy but cannot disjoin them.

Alleluia.....Randall Thompson

Homeland.....arr. by Z. Randall Stroope

I vow to thee, my country, all earthly things above,
Entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love;
The love that asks no question, the love that stands the test,
That lays upon the altar the dearest and the best;
The love that never falters, the love that pays the price,
The love that makes undaunted the final sacrifice...

Choral Reflection on Amazing Grace.....arr. by Roger Ames

Sherry Brown Carroll, soprano and Kay Brown, mezzo-soprano

Battle Hymn of the Republic.....arr. by Peter J. Wilhousky

Program Notes

"The Testament of Freedom" was composed in honor of the two hundredth anniversary of the birth of Thomas Jefferson. The texts, from the writings of Mr. Jefferson, were chosen by the composer, Randall Thompson. Originally written for men's voices, the first performance was at the University of Virginia, on Founder's Day, April 13, 1943. The performance was broadcast nation-wide and re-broadcast by the Office of War Information to the Armed Forces overseas in WWII.

"Alleluia" is a piece for SATB chorus by Randall Thompson. Composed over the first five days of July in 1940, it was given its World premiere on July 8 of that year at the Berkshire Music Center. The work was written on a commission from Serge Koussevitzky, director of the Tanglewood Festival. Koussevitzky wanted a "fanfare" for voices to be performed at the opening exercises of the new Berkshire Music Center, and he asked Thompson to contribute such a piece. Instead of the joyous work expected of him, the composer produced a quiet and introspective piece. Thompson was inspired by the war in Europe, and the recent fall of France; given these events, he felt that to write a festive piece would be inappropriate.

The text of the work consists of the word "Alleluia" repeated over and over again. The only other word in the text is "Amen", which is used once at the end. The end also divides the choir into seven parts.

Thompson once wrote that the Alleluia is "a very sad piece. The word "Alleluia" has so many possible interpretations. The music in my particular Alleluia cannot be made to sound joyous. It is a slow, sad piece, and...here it is comparable to the Book of Job, where it is written, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

"Homeland"

In 1921 Gustav Holst changed the music from a section of the song Jupiter from his suite The Planets to create a setting for the poem. The music was made a bit longer so that it would fit the last two lines of the first verse; the end result is usually called the Thaxted (named after the village where Holst lived for many years). This was first performed in 1925 and became very common at Armistice memorial ceremonies.[1]

Later on, Z. Randall Stroope would arrange a choir version of this song called "Homeland." He still used the "Jupiter" theme from the planets but also used two additional verses of his own to pay homage to his father who marched in the Bataan Death March.

Choral Reflection on Amazing Grace by Roger Ames is of the most performed arrangements of AMAZING GRACE in recent years. Written in 2011 for the 10th Anniversary this arrangement is dedicated to the children of the victims of 9/11.

"The Battle Hymn of the Republic," made popular in recordings by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir is frequently performed at music festivals, holiday celebrations, and state occasions. The Wilhousky setting of this 19th century hymn is possibly the most heartfelt musical pronouncement of American patriotism. Divisi sections in all parts are accessible and still richly expressive with harmonic colors and sweeping dynamic contrasts. Emotional and highly effective, it is a truly magnificent setting. It's also the one chosen most often by U.S. military ensembles.