

Choral Reviews

John C. Hughes, Editor

Multitude of Voyces: Sacred Music by Women

Composers, Volume I: SATB Anthems

Louise Stewart, ed. (2019)

SATB, div., various accompaniments

Texts: Latin, English, and German

Stainer & Bell, ISBN: 9781916216402

169 pages, £14.99, softcover

M*ultitude of Voyces: Sacred Music by Women Composers, Vol. I*, has arrived at a necessary juncture in the world of choral music. In a period where many conductors find themselves diligently researching and planning for diversity and inclusion of underrepresented voices on their programs, *Multitude of Voyces* delivers twenty-two SATB anthems by women composers, attractively assembled in an affordable collection.

This first volume covers a wide expanse of musical history, from the Renaissance through the twenty-first century. The earliest composer included is Raphaella Aleotti (c. 1570–after 1646), an Italian organist, prioress, and composer who spent much of her life at the famed Augustinian Convent of San Vito. Joanna Ward (b. 1998) is the youngest living composer incorporated, one of the inaugural Young Composers with the National Youth Chiors of Great Britain (2018). A few names are well known, such as Fanny (Mendelssohn) Hensel, Imogen Holst, Judith Weir, and Cecilia McDowall. However, there are several others who are not, and even a few newly discovered. This collection provides a platform for women composers whose voices have been restricted through social customs of past generations and continue to be challenged by male-dominated programming.

The anthology is balanced with regard to level of difficulty and most pieces are accessible to a wide array of choirs. While a majority of the compositions included are scored for SATB voices, a few contain limited divisi. For example, Aleotti's *Angelus ad pastores ait* is written for SSATB. Cecilia McDowall's *The Lord is Good* has additional divisi in all voices except for the bass, and includes two soprano solos. Furthermore, although many compositions are unaccompanied, a few call for various accompaniments. Maria Xaveria Peruchona's *Cessate tympana, cessate praelia*, one of the longer works in the collection, is scored for SATB voices with continuo accompaniment. Elizabeth Poston's *Sing unto the Lord* requires organ accompaniment, and Greta Tomlins' *Let all the world in every corner sing* involves either organ or piano. Still, all works are largely accessible and suited for a variety of ensembles, regardless of size, ability, or resources.

Textually, the repertoire spans the liturgical calendar. Several set texts of well-known poets such as Alfred, Lord Tennyson, John Donne, Emily Dickinson, Christina Rossetti, and the German Romantic, Wilhelm Müller. There are multiple settings of biblical texts, a traditional African American spiritual (*We Shall Walk through the Valley*), a *Stabat Mater*, and *Dona nobis pacem*, two excerpts from George Herbert's (1593–1633) *The Temple*, poetry by Emilia

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Lanier (1569–1645), Friedrich Leopold Graf zu Stolberg-Stolberg (1750–1819), and a setting from the 15th-century Sloane Manuscript 2593, a lyric poem about the Virgin Mary.

Multitude of Voyces provides a brief biographical snapshot of each composer and editorial commentary on each piece, including pitch and notation changes made with regard to the original manuscripts, translations not provided directly in the score, and a variety of other information to help with performance preparation. This research and its inclusion in the collection is vital, helpful, and an astute editorial decision.

As stated on their website, www.multitudeofvoyces.co.uk, Multitude of Voyces C.I.C. exists “to support underrepresented, underutilized, vulnerable, or marginalized communities, through creative use of music and words.” Under the leadership of Director and Series Editor Louise Stewart, they have done just that. This anthology is diverse, accessible, affordable, and educational.

Volume 2: Upper Voices Anthems, offering another twenty-three works by diverse women composers, is now available from Stainer & Bell. *Volume 3: Liturgical works*, is tentatively scheduled for late summer 2020, and a fourth volume for Advent/Christmas/Epiphany is planned.

— Sara J. Blessing

Composers included in *Multitude of Voyces: Sacred Music by Women Composers, Volume I: SATB Anthems*:

Raphaella Aleotti (c.1570–after 1646)	Imogen Holst (1907–84)	Rani Arbo (b. 1968)
Sulpitia Cesis (1577–c. 1619)	Greta Tomlins (1912–72)	Sarah MacDonald (b. 1968)
•	•	•
Maria Xaveria Peruchona (c. 1652–after 1709)	Cecilia McDowall (b. 1951)	Helen Williams (b. 1969)
•	•	•
Louise Reichardt (1779–1826)	Judith Bingham (b. 1952)	Alison Willis (b. 1971)
Fanny Hensel (1805–47)	Judith Weir (b. 1954)	Olivia Sparkhall (b. 1976)
Ethel Smyth (1858–1944)	Gail Randall (b. 1955)	Anna Semple (b. 1997)
•	•	•
Undine Smith Moore (1904–89)	Janet Wheeler (b. 1957)	Joanna Ward (b. 1998)
Elizabeth Poston (1905–87)		

Half Moon Rising

John Winzenburg, ed. (2015)

SATB (some *divisi*), piano

Text: Mandarin, Taiwanese, Cantonese, Thao, Hakka, and Jiangsu

Edition Peters, EP72625, ISMN:

9790577009087

244 pages, \$25.25, softcover

Recording: Sampler CD included

Half Moon Rising is a collection of twenty-four SATB choral works from mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan, with a recording of each piece provided on a companion CD.

In the front matter, editor John Winzenburg provides a brief survey of China's recent music history and culture, contextualizing the growth of Chinese choral music from the 1950s onward, and clearly outlining what is offered in the collection: a "step-by-step approach towards accessing, understanding, and performing Chinese choral music." The book contains three loosely-defined types of pieces: folk tunes squarely in the Western-Romantic tradition, works with an emphasis on Chinese folk styles combined with Western-Romantic influences, and expanded styles. An introduction specific to each piece offers background on the tune or text, information about the arranger or composer, a literal translation, and performance notes which often include rehearsal suggestions. Winzenburg did not arrange any of the pieces, despite devoting most of his research to Chinese music. Instead, he allows compositional voices with the most understanding and knowledge of the traditions to share their music.

A helpful Mandarin pronunciation guide with both IPA symbols and transliteration is provided. Not all of the works are in Mandarin; other languages included are Taiwanese, Cantonese, Thao, Hakka, and Jiangsu dialect (a dialect of

Mandarin). Singing in Cantonese is not always straightforward because of distinct dialects; the two Cantonese pieces in this collection use different transliteration systems "in order to reflect the Singaporean and Hong Kong backgrounds of their composers." Online assistance is also available, including specific pronunciation help in both written and aural forms. The "About this text" section is useful for analysis, and just as valuable are the "Performance Notes," which outline pronunciation or onomatopoeic ideas critical to the performance of each work. With the help of these tools the text is attainable for those who lack experience with these languages.

Folk songs are the foundation for most of the pieces. The title work, *Ban Ge Yue Liang Pa Shang Lai* (Half Moon Rising) is an unaccompanied folk song that furnishes a good starting place for many ensembles. The amount of text is manageable, and it is one of the earliest (1953) arrangements the anthology offers. Other accessible pieces include *Hong Dou Ci* (Red Bean Poem), which is accompanied, or *Ken Chun Ni* (Cultivating Spring Soil), which is unaccompanied. For an interesting set, a director could program *Mo Li Hua* (Jasmine Flower) with *Shui Xian Hua* (Narcissus Flower), both variations on the same folk tune.

Throughout the collection, most of the harmonic language is accessible to Western-trained choirs, however less aurally familiar music is also included. The accompanied original composition *Ru Meng Ling* (Like a Dream) is quite angular at times, and the unaccompanied *Shui Guang Lian Yan* (Ripples Glisten Away...) includes extended vocal techniques.

For the conductor who does not know where to begin when programming Chinese choral music, *Half Moon Rising* abounds with opportunities to explore a relatively

under-performed tradition that is ultimately beneficial not only to conductors as leaders and learners, but also to the development of singers.

— Shannon Gravelle

Requiem d-Moll, WAB 39

Anton Bruckner (1824–1896), ed. Anselm Eber (2019)

SATB soli, SATB chorus, div., 3 trombones, horn strings, organ

Text: Latin

Seven movements: I. *Requiem*, II. *Dies irae*, III. *Offertorium*, IV. *Sanctus*, V. *Benedictus*, VI. *Agnus Dei*, VII. *Communio*

Score: Carus Verlag 27.320

60 pages, \$19.99, softcover

Recording: Bruckner, Anton, *Requiem*. RIAS Kammerchoir and Akademie für Alte Musik, Accentus Music, ACC30474

On 14 March 1849, Anton Bruckner completed the *Requiem in D minor*, his first major choral-orchestral composition, for the memorial of a long-time friend and patron, Franz Seiler, who died suddenly on September 13, 1848. Seiler served as a clerk and custodian of legal documents at St. Florian Monastery, a community important to Bruckner's development as a young musician. Bruckner was sent to St. Florian at the age of thirteen to serve as a choirboy and later as an organist. Seiler also bequeathed Bruckner a Bösendorfer piano, which Bruckner respectfully kept his entire life. This instrument is still housed at St. Florian today. The *Requiem* was premiered at St. Florian on September 15, 1849 with Bruckner at the grand organ.

Bruckner would go on to revise minor details of the work at least twice throughout this life. According to this edition, Bruckner revised this

personally meaningful work around 1894, when Franz Bayer desired to mount a performance of the *Requiem* in Steyr. Bruckner's revisions retained the overall structure of the piece but did include a few melodic corrections to the violin parts, chromatic alterations of a few harmonies, and changes in articulations and dynamic markings. Therefore, this edition is in the line of the *Alte Gesamtausgabe* (Robert Hass, 1930) and *Neue Gesamtausgabe* (Leopold Nowak, 1966 with revision by Rüdiger Bornhöft, 1998) editions, which all consider Bruckner's autograph with revisions as the primary source and the autograph parts as a second source. It is noteworthy that the newest Anton Bruckner *Urtext Gesamtausgabe* edited by Benjamin-Gunnar Cohrs treats the autograph as a secondary source and replaces it with a score and performing parts from a December 11, 1849 performance at Kremsmünster. It is argued by Cohrs that this performance material, which has been neglected by previous editors, already shows the majority of the revisions found in the revised autograph of 1894. The Cohrs edition is available as a rental through Schott and was the edition used for the suggested recording by Borowicz listed above. In the end, the differences between the Eber and Cohrs editions are arguably slight, and so the practicality of being able to purchase the Eber edition through Carus can be seen as a benefit.

The work is a noteworthy testament to a young master and features a dramatic, yet compact setting of the *Requiem* text. Certain features and stylistic approaches point towards the influence of Mozart and Michael Haydn.¹ Most notable are Bruckner's choices surrounding the principal key of D minor, the instrumentation of three trombones as a continuation of Austrian practice, the use of continuo, and the melodic tunefulness of the vocal lines. In the first movement, Bruckner

¹ Manfred Schuler, "Bruckner's *Requiem* und das St. Florianer Repertoire musikalischer Totenmessen," *Anton Bruckner—Tradition und Fortschritt in der Kirchenmusik des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Riedel, Sinzig, 2001: 125–138.

combines the texts of the *Introitus* and the *Kyrie* while unifying the movement with a syncopated figure in the unison violins. This type of through-ostinato is a marked characteristic of each movement. The *Dies irae* features the entire text of the sequence in one continuous movement that is constructed in a quasi-rondo form featuring alternating choral *tutti* passages with passages written for each of the soloists. The insertion of a tenor *recitativ* on the text *Judex ergo* is quite a welcome surprise. The *Offertorium* is divided into three linked movements most notable of which is the central *Hostias* in B-flat major and set for four-part men's chorus (or soloists) and punctuated by the three trombones. The composition is a prime example of the nineteenth-century Germanic *Männerchor* style. The *Quam olim* in F minor forms the final section of the *Offertorium* and stands as a remarkable testament to Bruckner's early mastery of counterpoint. This movement is constructed as a double fugue accompanied by an additional contrapuntal line, a *moto perpetuo* of eighth notes for violin I and II in unison. The *Sanctus*, in twelve-eight time and D minor, is set for SSATB choral forces accompanied by pulsing eighth note figures in the strings. The *Benedictus* in B-flat major is marked by the additional timbre of a solo horn (a part

played by the bass trombonist) and features solo quartet writing alternating with the full choir which culminates in an unaccompanied *Osanna*. The *Agnus Dei* begins with the alto soloist in D minor with a response by the choir. The stunning choral proclamation of "*lux*" using a D-major chord is the climax of the movement. The *Agnus Dei* concludes with a half-cadence, which leads to the only completely unaccompanied movement, *Requiem*, in F major. This movement could be viewed as a foreshadowing of the Cecilian-inspired choruses of Bruckner's later output. The concluding *Cum sanctis* returns to D minor and is characterized by unison chorus set against a unison string counterpoint with harmonic support in the trombones.

This neglected work is worthy of performance and is within the reach of accomplished church, community, and collegiate ensembles. The instrumentation is conceived in such a way that a minimal number of instrumentalists can still realize the work successfully. With this new, accessible performance edition by Carus, a rarely performed masterpiece stands ready for further discovery.

—John P. Rakes