

PSALM 23

SATB DIV., A CAPPELLA

PSALM 23 AND ROMANS 8
ANDREW STEFFEN



About the Work:

There exists innumerable settings of Psalm 23 in the choral canon. The text, often used as a comforter for many assuages fear of the unknown and often the passing from the living to the eternal. For myself, I found solace in using this text as a way of coping with grief and loss. When my maternal grandmother and last living grandparent passed away in January 2024, I was overwhelmed with sadness. She was the musician on that particular side of the family and was a heavy influence on my own musical upbringing. One of the things that stood out to me as my family communicated her passing and easing out of this realm was when her Pastor visited and recited Psalm 23 beside her bed. As a devout Lutheran her whole life, she took extreme solace in her faith. Learning that she used whatever breath and life she had in her to recite this Psalm alongside her Pastor touched something deep in me.

After her passing, I didn't know how to cope, so I used writing to help keep her with me. This piece begins with the Tenors reciting a melody, and as it expands sonically, the Sopranos and Altos enter, but at a whisper and rhythmically behind the melody. This serves to represent those last breaths and pieces of energy to recite a comforting passage. As the work continues to progress and excerpt and adaptation from Romans declares that no matter what realms to words separate us that their love will be felt forever.

Psalm 23

Adaptation of Psalm 23:1-6
and Romans 8:38-39

Andrew Steffen

Like a meditative chant, ♩ = 52,

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of three flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor). It features three vocal parts: Tenor (T), Bass (B), and Soprano/Alto (S/A). The score is divided into four systems, each with a measure number (8, 4, 7, 10) at the beginning of the vocal line. Dynamics include *p* (piano), *mf* (mezzo-forte), and *p* (piano) with the instruction "out of breath, faintly". There are several triplet markings (3) throughout the piece. The lyrics are: "The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He leads me by still waters and restores my soul, my soul, my soul. And though I walk through death's dark valley I fear no evil for you, because you are with me; and though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will not be afraid, for you are with me." The Soprano/Alto part begins at measure 7 with the lyrics "and though I walk...".

Tenor
8 *p* The Lord is my shep - herd I shall not want He

Bass
p warm, present, unobtrusive
Mm

T
4 leads me by still wa - ters and re - stores my soul, my

B
mf

S
A
7 and though I walk... *p* out of breath, faintly

T
8 soul, my soul. And though I walk

B
p *mf* And though I walk through

S
A
10 through death's dark val - ley I fear no e - vil

T
8 through death's dark val ley I fear no e - vil for you

B
death's dark val - ley I fear no e - vil for you

12

S
A

...walk with me

T

walk with me, walk with me and

B

walk with me, walk with me and

15

S

mp out of breath, faintly

and sure - ly good - ness and love will fol - low

A

mp out of breath, faintly

and sure - ly good - ness and love will fol - low

T

strong, but not heavy or forced sounding - more reinforced

sure - ly good - ness and love will fol - low for

B

strong, but not heavy or forced sounding - more reinforced

sure - ly good - ness and love will fol - low for

17

S

for all of my days and I'll dwell in your house

A

for all of my days days and I'll dwell in your house

T

all of my days and I'll dwell in Your house

B

all of my days and I'll dwell in your house

19

S for - - ev - er *mp* ev - er more *f* For nei - ther

A for - - ev - er *mp* ev - er more *f* For nei - ther

T for - - - ev - er *mp* ev - er more

B for - - - ev - er *mp* ev - er more

22

S death or life, an - gels or de - mons, pre - sent or fu - ture or a - ny po - wer can *with conviction*

A death or life, an - gels or de - mons, pre - sent or fu - ture or a - ny po - wer can *with conviction*

T death or life, an - gels or de - mons, pre - sent or fu - ture or a - ny po - wer can *f with conviction*

B death or life, an - gels or de - mons, pre - sent or fu - ture or a - ny po - wer can *f with conviction*

24

S se - p'rate us *mf* se - p'rate us, *p* se - p'rate us

A se - p'rate us *mf* se - p'rate us, *p* se - p'rate us

T se - p'rate us, it can't *mf* se - p'rate us, can't *p* se - p'rate us Mm

B se - p'rate us, *mf* se - p'rate us, *p* se - p'rate us Mm