

March 1, 2022

Dear Connecticut All State Musicians,

In a little less than one we will meet for the first time to become a new choral community, bound by notes, rhythms, and words. Hopefully we will begin to quickly identify as ensemble that, in a short eleven hours, is able to tell our stories. Our stories take us from Kenya, to Haiti, to Jordan, and to the colors of the USA. I truly am looking forward to seeing how we can coalesce into an exceptional ensemble. Eleven hours of rehearsal may sound particularly grueling, but in minutes, for a program of this difficulty, it is a challenge. You certainly will come in well prepared according to all I have heard.

I strongly urge you to use the practice tracks provided, especially the pronunciation of *Twa Tanbou* and *Lao Rahal Soti*. The tempi of *Twa Tanbou* and *Alleluia* are quite fast and will retire agility. Please do also look at the various solos in *Lao Rahal Soti* (a mezzo) and *True Colors* (all voice types will be considered – but in the octave written).

Choral Music: Telling Stories

“Alleluia” (from *Songs of Faith*) by Paul Basler: Paul is a great friend and a superb French Horn player as well. He is a professor of horn and composition at the University of Florida in Gainesville. He is also a former U. S. Fulbright Scholar and spent a year in Kenya. Much of his music is inspired by the rhythms of the people and sounds he heard while living in Kenya. The “Alleluia” is full of a number of these “African” rhythms including those sections as seen in measure 23 with the “alle, alle, alle, alle” section or at mms. 54 – 67 where our tonal color is changed to a brighter – almost nasal- sound. Please circle M 94-95 where the tempo and character of the music changes to a much more lyrical style. The tempo change that occurs here, along with the rhythmic alteration at M 142 have been issues with some ensembles. Pay particular attention to accents and the staccatos throughout this composition.

***Lao Rahal Soti* – arranged Shireen Abu-Khadar:** I believe you have a track to listen to of the Syrian language, you will note the use of the stops in the language. Spend enough time to prepare this language! It is a protest song, but certainly softened by Shireen’s arrangement. There is of course something to remind all of us of how powerful symbolism can be – the Ukraine citizens who are fighting for their land and country.

***A Boy and a Girl* – by Eric Whitacre:** I first performed this with the Oklahoma Arts Institute at Quartz Mountain in the summer of 2001 in manuscript (before any of you were born). Paul Basler was my horn player for several works that summer. This composition is fabulous on the text of Octavio Paz, additional works that Eric has set of Paz include *Water Night*, and *Cloudburst*.

We need to have our eyes out of the score and be ready to mold this composition with a strong sense of rubato. Please lean into the dissonant notes, and to use the text, words like “stretched out”, “savoring”, and “kissing” are incredibly important. Then need to have an onomatopoeic (definition: words whose sounds suggest a sense) character. Lots of dynamic contrasts. This begins a period in Whitacre’s music of tintinnabulation, much like Arvo Pärt. One of Eric’s finest works with this technique is *When David Heard* – take a listen on YouTube if you are interested in this technique.



True Colors – arranged by Matthew A. Brown (words and Music by Billy Steinberg and Tom Kelly – made famous by Cyndi Lauper): This great setting of Dr. Matthew Brown will again require tremendous attention to detail to bring this score to life. There is a fabulous solo after a short introduction. In this setting please be aware of when you serve as an accompanying part - or as primary melodic material. Carefully follow all of Matt's indications – from dynamics – to the tenuto/staccato indications – on m. 27 for instance - and please read the rhythms not what you might always wish to observe. Watch out measure – 48- 51 not to rush this section! At M 74 – I will use one or two voices no more on the soprano obligato. Careful of not over singing at *fff* on M 74-45. Eyes up to catch the lone soprano pickup to measure 76.

Twa Tanbou – by Sydney Guillaume: As a music educator it has been my mission always to support young composers. Sydney was my student in the University of Miami Frost Chorale when I taught there. He was a senior, had never sung in a choir and did not speak English before he arrived in the states from Haiti at age 12. The first composition he wrote was a *Kalinda* – which the Chorale sang on our tour to the ACDA National Conference in New York City in 2003. This is the story of three drums and our goal is to know which drum we are singing about: the Boula, Tanbouren or the Kata. We will need to become the colors of the sounds heard in Sydney's native Haiti. I urge you to work on the tracks of the Creole and the tracks of your voice part. Note again the accents, the staccato, and the great variants of dynamics.

I look forward to being with you for our three days together. I thank you for your work prior to our first collaboration together – and I thank your teachers, the All-State organizers, and your parents for their support of the Connecticut Music Educators Association.

Sincerely,

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National President (2011-2013)