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Composer's note

It was a privilege and an honour to be invited to write the Raymond Brock Memorial Commission for the ACDA National Conference in Dallas in 2021. I was asked to write something that embraced certain aspects of diversity: a rich, beautiful, and complex subject. I asked a brilliant young poet, Delphine Chalmers, to come on this journey with me to create this piece. As the National Conference ended up taking place virtually, this piece was first performed by the BBC Singers with pianist Anna Tilbrook, in a video recording to be broadcast to delegates. The piece was originally written for mixed voices, but some months later I re-worked it as this version for The Children's Chorus of Washington, D.C. and their Musical Director, Margaret Clark.

I have learnt so much from a life of extensive travel, through music and collaboration with many different people, but the overriding thing is that, as Maya Angelou says in her great poem 'Human Family', 'We are more alike, my friends, than we are unlike'. Throughout life, music has been my barometer; it has helped me to understand so many things and so many people, and I hold this deep in my heart, hence the title *Songs my Heart has Taught Me*. Delphine and I decided to use musical concepts as titles for the four songs that make up the work, exploring how these can help us to understand commonality.

The first song, 'Unison', is an anthem to unity that ends with the powerful line, 'The song of the future and the song of our souls are in unison'. 'Harmony', written in a more fluid, musical-theatre style, touches on people's need to be accepted, in a way like a note in a chord, in such a way that we can feel embraced, as Delphine writes so eloquently: 'In the song of shared acceptance lies an inner harmony.' The third song, 'Rhythm', is a spiky piece with a beat that tells of life's rhythm, of the pulse that the living all share, and it urges us to seize the day. Finally, in 'Resolution', the melody is spun by the singers over a simple, recurring chord structure. The poetic refrain is strongly influenced by the words of the 14th-century female mystic, Julian of Norwich: 'All shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well.' The piece ends quietly and tonally, but of course does not completely resolve. That is the story of life.

Duration: c.11 minutes

Commissioned by the American Choral Directors Association as the 2021 Raymond W. Brock Memorial Commission.
This version is dedicated to Margaret Clark and the Children's Chorus of Washington, D.C.

Songs my Heart has Taught Me

Delphine Chalmers (b. 1998)

BOB CHILCOTT

1. Unison

With certainty ♩ = c.88

SOPRANO 1
SOPRANO 2

unis. p

When the bark of our__

ALTO

p

mm

PIANO

p

con Ped.

6

skin Be-comes soft to the__ touch And the breeze leafs__ through our__

mm

mm

42

flocks And make a home in warm - er skies, The

flocks And make a home in warm - er skies, The

47

pat - terns of the birds And the lives we weave Are in

pat - terns of the birds And the lives we weave Are in

52

u - ni - son, u - ni - son.

u - ni - son, u - ni - son.

mf *p*

mf *p*

mf *p*

2. Harmony

In the groove ♩ = c.100

SOPRANO 1
SOPRANO 2

ALTO

PIANO

mf

Am I too co-mic?

con Ped.

4 unis. mf

f

Or too me-lan-cho-lic? Too bold, or too old, or too vain? I

f

Too bold, or too old, or too vain? I

f

7

play the clown, brave their frowns. Is the

play the clown, brave their frowns. Is the

24 *f* *ah* *ah*

f 3 3

Stum - bling and strug - gling to land.

f

26 *ff* *f* 3

I can soar through it all. May - be it's

ff *f* 3

I can soar through it all. May - be it's

ff *f*

28 3 3 3

time for my last cur - tain call, my last cur - tain

3 3 3

time for my last cur - tain call, my last cur - tain

44

har - mo - ny, _____

mf

in - - - ner _____ *mf* har - mo - ny, in - - - ner _____

mf

in - - - ner _____ har - mo - ny, in - - - ner _____

47 har - mo - ny, _____ *mp*

har - mo - ny, har - - - mo - ny, lies an *mp*

har - mo - ny, har - - - mo - ny, lies an *mp*

50 *rit.* *p*

in - - - ner har - mo - ny, har - - - mo - ny. *p*

in - - - ner har - mo - ny, har - - - mo - ny. *p*

rit. *p*

3. Rhythm

Strict tempo ♩ = c.92

TUTTI VOICES

PIANO

f

You can

3

hear it in the crackle of the break - ing dawn when the world is wak - ing up a - fresh. The—

5

blar - ing horns and your sti - fled yawn say to paint your co - lours on the day.

(tutti handclap)

20

Feel the pulse and set life's beat.

Feel the pulse and set life's beat.

22

You can note it in the beat-ing of your joy - ful heart when your

You can note the

24

steps e - cho on the street. The busk - er's riffs and his cheer - ful call fill the

rhy - thm, note the rhy - thm, note the

39

Clap it. Tap it. E - ven rap it. Feel the pulse, the pulse.

Clap it. Tap it. E - ven rap it. Feel the pulse, the pulse.

41 *ff*

Clap it. Tap it. E - ven rap it. Feel the pulse and set life's beat.

Clap it. Tap it. E - ven rap it. Feel the pulse and set life's beat.

43

Clap it. Tap it. E - ven rap it. Feel the pulse and set life's beat.

Clap it. Tap it. E - ven rap it. Feel the pulse and set life's beat.

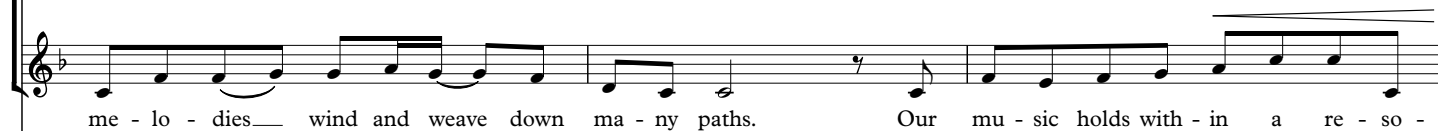
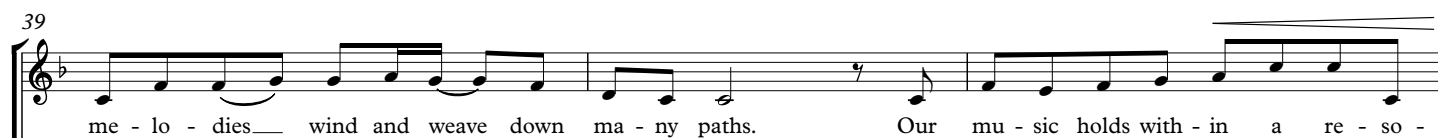
fff

a tempo

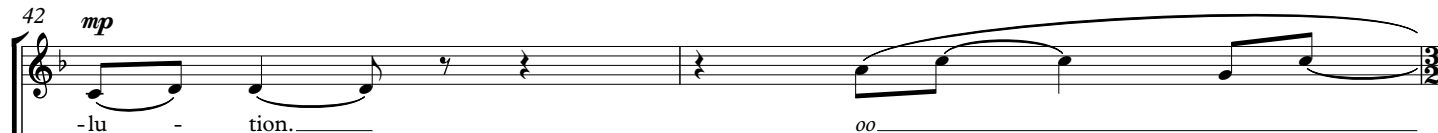
36

p dolce*p dolce***a tempo***p dolce*

39



42

mp*mp*