

# Three Psalms

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Texts from  
Psalms 12, 66, and 120

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The impetus for this work was research into the various types and functions of psalms from a textual perspective; how do they function as poetry, rather than as liturgy? Unsurprisingly, there is a good deal of scholarship on this subject, often categorizing psalms based on their subjects. In particular, this work focuses on Psalm 66 (functioning both as a Hymn of Praise and a Hymn of Thanksgiving), Psalm 12 (a Community Lament), and Psalm 120 (an Individual Lament).<sup>1</sup>

I had several goals from the beginning of the compositional process. First, I wanted to pay homage to the tradition of harmonized chant; the second movement does this with a contemporary harmonic flavor. Second, I wanted my third movement to reflect my admiration of Renaissance counterpoint; an individual lament needed parts that could function with melodic independence while also working together.

Finally, I knew that the composition needed to be, simply, enjoyable. I, like many others, have a complex relationship with Christianity and with religion, but singing both sacred and secular music has always made me happy. From the start, I wanted the composition of the piece to reflect this pleasure and be musically and aesthetically satisfying independently of the words. Music should appeal to our most basic senses; it should not address primarily those individuals who can grasp its complexities. I hope that the music I have written will illuminate the texts for those who engage with them but will nevertheless provide excitement and joy for those who do not.

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<sup>1</sup> These categorizations are based on the writings of Lawrence Boadt, specifically Boadt, Lawrence, Richard J. Clifford, and Daniel J. Harrington. "Israelite Worship and Prayer." *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction*. New York: Paulist, 1984. 282. Print.

# Performance Notes

The piece was composed primarily for an SATB choir consisting of approximately 30 singers, but the premiere performance featured slightly different personnel, both for convenience and for the sake of accentuating the structure and relationship between movements. As the first movement is the call to worship, it was performed by the full ensemble. The second and third movements are more particular, personal laments, and it was therefore appropriate to utilize a solo quintet for them. The final movement began with the quintet (as the opening of the final movement follows directly from the end of the third movement), but the full ensemble joined for the last 19 measures of the piece, balancing the texture at the beginning of the work and including as many voices as possible for the repeated "Praise be to God."

The solo that is written in the third movement was originally intended for one voice to carry throughout. However, considering that the solo section in measures 68-84 sits considerably higher than the rest, these bars may be sung by a different soloist (provided that the final line of the movement is performed, as it was meant to be, as a completion of the first line of the movement).

# Movement 1: Psalm 66

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**Allegro** ♩ = 88

*f* ♩ = ♩ throughout

SOPRANO *f* Shout for joy to God, all the earth!

ALTO *f* Sing the glo-ry of his name;

TENOR

BASS *f* Shout for joy to God, all the earth!

7 **A** *p* Shout for joy to God, all the earth! Shout for joy to God, all the earth!

make his praise\_ glo-ri-ous.

*f* make his praise\_ glo-ri-ous. *mp* Sing the

Shout for joy to God, all the earth! Shout for joy to God, all

13 *mp* make his praise\_ glo-ri-ous, make his praise\_ glo-ri-ous, Sing the glo-ry

*cresc. poco a poco* Shout for joy to God, all the earth! Shout for joy to God, all the earth! Shout for joy to

*mf* glo-ry of his\_ name; Sing the glo-ry of his\_ name; make his praise\_

*cresc. poco a poco* the earth! Shout for joy to God, all the earth! Shout for joy to God, all

# Movement 2: Psalm 12

Chant-like, freely ♩=60

**SOPRANO**  
*mp*  
 Help, Lord, for no one is faith-ful an-y-more; those who are loy-al have van-ished from the hu-man race.

**ALTO**  
*mp*  
 Help, Lord, for no one is faith-ful an-y-more those who are loy-al have van-ished from the hu-man race.

**TENOR**  
*mp*  
 Help, Lord, for no one is faith-ful an-y-more those who are loy-al have van-ished from the hu-man race.

**BASS**  
*mp*  
 Help, Lord, for no one is faith-ful an-y-more those who are loy-al have van-ished from the hu-man race.

6 *sub.f*  
 Ev' ry-one lies to their neigh-bor; they flat-ter with their lips but har-bor de-cep-tion in their hearts

*sub.f* 3 *p*  
 Ev' ry-one lies to their neigh-bor; they flat-ter with their lips but har-bor de-cep-tion in their hearts

*sub.f* 3 *p*  
 Ev' ry-one lies to their neigh-bor; they flat-ter with their lips but har - bor de-cep-tion in their hearts

*sub.f* 3 *p*  
 Ev' ry-one lies to their neigh-bor; they flat-ter with their lips but har - bor de-cep-tion in their hearts

12 **F** *mf*  
 Help, Lord, for no one is faith-ful an-y-more; those who are loy - al have van-ished, have van-ished from the

*mf*  
 Help, Lord, no one is faith - ful, the loy - al have

*mf*  
 Help, Lord, for no one is faith - ful. Those who are loy-al have van- ished from the

*mf*  
 Help, Lord, Help, Lord, Help, Lord,

# Movement 3: Psalm 120

Quasi recitativo ♩=50

Solo *p*  
I call on the Lord in my dis - tress...

SOPRANO *p*  
I call on the Lord in my dis-tress, and he

ALTO *p*  
I call on the

TENOR *p*  
I call on the Lord in

BASS

10 **I** *mp*  
Save me, Lord, from

an - swers me, he an - swers me

Lord in my dis-tress, and he an - swers me, he an - swers me.

my dis-tress, and he an - swers me, he an - swers me

*p* *mf*  
I call on the Lord in my dis - tress

# Movement 4: Psalm 66

With determination ♩=60

*accel. poco a poco* *mf*

SOPRANO  
all you who fear, all you who fear God

ALTO *f* *mf*  
Come and hear, all you who fear God, all you who fear, all you who fear God

TENOR *mf*  
All you who fear, all you who fear God

BASS *mf*  
all you who fear God

9 ♩=108 *mp* *mf*

Tell you what he has done for me all you who fear God

*mf* *mp*  
Let me tell you what he has done for me all you who fear God

*mp*  
Tell you what he's done for me all you who fear God

*mp* *mf*  
Tell you what he's done for me all you who fear God I

17 *mp*

Cried out all you who fear God on my tongue, I

Cried out all you who fear God on my tongue, I

Cried out all you who fear God Praise was on my tongue I

cried out to him with my mouth, all you who fear God, His praise was on my tongue: I