

Program Notes

It is an intimate pleasure to compose for one's own ensemble; one knows best the nuance and subtleties of those who sing and play together with such frequency. These two settings of beloved African-American spirituals were composed in successive years for performance prior to the liturgies of Holy Thursday and Good Friday, pivotal days with rites of rich complexity, redolent of the music of the ages and of many places. The presence of both plainsong and musical texts and tunes of a quasi-folkloric nature soothed as a balm the complexity of other perhaps more learned music.

These settings of time-honored spirituals cast in a purposefully opulent and improvisatory style are offered to conductors, choruses, soli and listeners for concert, the academy, the community and church as they find here yet two more works to continue this singularly American tradition.

Performance Notes

The singing and playing of these settings should be marked by a musical honesty flowing from the simple fervor and emotional directness of the pristine model. Indeed, there was much freedom and improvisation in the first performances; the manuscripts were revised and refined, hopefully without loss of that original ethos, in the calm of summer. It is my hope that considerable flexibility of interpretation will yield newness at successive renderings.

Leo Nestor
The Catholic University of America
Washington, DC
20 June 2002

Were You There?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Sometimes it causes me to tremble.

Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?
Sometimes it causes me to tremble.

Were you there when the sun refused to shine?
Sometimes it causes me to tremble.

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?
Sometimes it causes me to tremble.

Were you there when they rolled the stone away?
Sometimes it causes me to tremble.

African-American Spiritual

Leo Nestor

Leo Nestor (b. 1948) is Justine Bayard Ward Professor of Music, director of choral activities, director of graduate studies in sacred music, and serves on the conducting, composition and Center for Latin American Music faculties at The Catholic University of America Benjamin T. Rome School of Music in Washington, D.C. He is artistic director and conductor of the American Repertory Singers (ARS), a founding member of the Conference of Roman Catholic Cathedral Musicians (CRCCM), an artistic director and jurist of the Congresso Mondiale Maestri di Cappella Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina in Rome. From 1984-2001, Dr. Nestor was music director at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

for Linda Kennedy-Sill

Two Spirituals

2. Were You There?

for Soprano Solo, SATB Chorus and Organ

African-American Spiritual

Setting: Leo Nestor

Flowing wistfully, always in 2 $\text{♩} = 60-69$

(solo)

mf *lirico*

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 1-3) features a piano accompaniment with a right-hand melody and a left-hand bass line. A solo line is indicated by a bracket above the first staff. The second system (measures 4-7) continues the piano accompaniment. The third system (measures 8-11) includes a '(re-register)' instruction for the piano and concludes with a final cadence. The score is written in 2/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

13 *mf con calore*
 Sop. Solo
 Were you
 S
 A
 T
 B

17 *più f*
 there when they cru - ci - fied my Lord? Were you there when they
 (S/A) *mf con calore* *più f*
 Ah, ah.

22 *f* *breve* *poco rall.*
 cru - ci - fied my Lord? O!
f *breve* *poco rall.*
 O!
f *breve* *poco rall.*

26 *a tempo*

Some - times it caus - es me to trem - ble, trem - ble,

a tempo Ah,

a tempo Ah,

30 *meno mosso* *breve*

trem - ble. Were you there when they cru - ci - fied my

meno mosso *breve*

Ah,

meno mosso *breve*

34 *a tempo*

Sop. Solo Lord?

S *a tempo* *f con calore, legato molto*

A Were you there when they

T *a tempo* *f con calore, legato molto*

B

mf (re-register)

37

nailed him to the tree? Were you there when they

the tree? Were you

41

nailed him to the tree? O! Some - times it

ben f *SS4

ben f

* Equal division of SS4

46

(SA) trem - ble,

meno f trem - ble,

meno f trem - ble.

caus - es me to trem - ble, trem - ble, trem - ble.

50

poco tenuto

poco rall.

breve

a tempo

Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?

55

60

S
A

T
B

unis. f sonoro

...re fused to

Were you there when the sun re - fused to shine?

(re-register)
(+ enclosed reed)

64

shine?

...to shine?

Were you there when the sun re - fused to shine?

68

Sop. Solo *f* O! Some times it

S A *ben f* O! O!

T B *ben f*

71

piu f *ff* caus - es me to trem - ble, trem - ble, trem - ble...

piu f *ff* O! ...trem - ble, trem - ble, trem - ble...

piu f *ff*

75 *meno mosso*
ben f, dramatically *poco rall.* *a tempo*

— Were you there when the sun re - fused to shine?

meno mosso *ben f* *poco rall.* *a tempo*

Ah.

meno mosso *ben f* *poco rall.* *a tempo*

meno mosso *ben f* *poco rall.* *a tempo*

poco rall.

79 *f ben legato*

S
A
T
B

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb,

f ben legato
(solo reed, warmly)

ben f

83 *più f*

...there_ when they laid him in the tomb?

più f

88 *f*

Sop. Solo *ben f* *breve* Some - times it caus - es me to

S A *meno f* O! Some - times it caus - es

T B *ben f* *breve* *meno f*

breve

92

meno mosso

mf

trem - ble, trem - ble, trem - ble. Were you there when they

meno mosso

mf con calore

me to trem - ble, trem - ble. Ah

mf con calore

meno mosso

meno mosso

97

breve

a tempo

laid him in the tomb?

breve

a tempo

a tempo

breve

*a tempo
come sopra, più ardente
(solo)*

breve mf lirico

102

(re-register)

This block contains the piano accompaniment for measures 102 through 107. It features a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The music is in a minor key with a 3/4 time signature. A large slur covers the entire passage. A '(re-register)' instruction is placed above the right hand in measure 106.

108

f

This block contains the piano accompaniment for measures 108 through 112. It continues the grand staff notation. A dynamic marking of '*f*' is placed above the right hand in measure 110. A large slur covers the entire passage.

113

Sop. Solo

f serenely

Ah,

S A

f serenely

Were you there when they rolled the stone a - way?

T B

f serenely

sonoro, colla voce

(re-register)

This block contains the vocal and piano accompaniment for measures 113 through 117. It includes staves for Soprano Solo, Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The piano accompaniment is in a grand staff. The vocal parts have lyrics: 'Ah,' for the Soprano Solo and 'Were you there when they rolled the stone a - way?' for the Soprano and Alto. Dynamic and performance markings include '*f* serenely' and 'sonoro, colla voce'. A '(re-register)' instruction is placed above the piano right hand in measure 116. A large slur covers the entire passage.

117

ah, *molto*

Were you there when they rolled the stone a - way?

Were you *molto*

121

breve

ah.

ben f *breve*

Some - times

O! Some - times it caus - es me to

ben f *breve*

breve

125

Sop. Solo *poco tenuto*
mf calandosi al fine

Were you

S A *meno f* trem - ble, trem - ble, trem - ble. *meno f* *poco tenuto*
mf calandosi al fine

Were you

T B trem - ble, trem - ble, trem - ble. *meno f* *meno f* *mf calandosi al fine*
poco tenuto

calandosi al fine

129

meno mosso there when they rolled the stone a - way? *poco rall.* *breve* *rall. molto* *lunga*

meno mosso there when they rolled the stone a way? *poco rall.* *breve* *rall. molto* *lunga* **p**

poco rall. *breve* *rall. molto* My Lord. *lunga* **p**

meno mosso *p poco rall. breve* *rall. molto* *lunga* **pp**

(+ soft 32')