

JOCELYN HAGEN AND TIMOTHY TAKACH:
AN INTRODUCTION TO THEIR CHORAL MUSIC AND A STUDY OF THEIR POSITIONS
WITHIN A LINEAGE OF MINNESOTA-BASED COMPOSERS

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DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

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Dr. Jo Ann Miller

Chair

Dr. Michael Weber

Dr. Robert Groves

Dr. Thomas Isern

Approved:

March 8, 2013

Date

Dr. John Miller

Department Chair

ABSTRACT

This study serves as an introduction to the choral music of Jocelyn Hagen and Timothy Takach. It also examines their positions within a lineage that includes three generations of successful Minnesota-based composers. It begins with Dominick Argento as the key figure in the first generation. The second group includes Stephen Paulus, Libby Larsen, Carol Barnett, and Craig Carnahan. Hagen, Takach, and Abbie Betinis have emerged as leaders of the third generation, and are discussed in that context. Major similarities that link each generation include a high level of compositional craft and advocacy work on behalf of other composers and the artistic community in the Twin Cities. These similarities are explored as part of this thesis.

Additionally, this study explores the link between the composers of this lineage and the thriving choral community found in Minnesota, especially in the Twin Cities region. Conductors Dale Warland and Philip Brunelle have been important figures in the musical and personal lives of nearly every composer in this lineage. Their careers and philosophies regarding the commissioning of new music are also studied.

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DEDICATION

For their dedication to me, mine I give to them...

With much love to Brynn, Eleanor, and Miriam.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

For more than a century, Minnesota has been home for many talented and respected choral composers. These composers have found great success in a region that is well known for producing excellent choral music, and it is because of this tradition that a study of the lineage of these composers is appropriate.

Minnesota's choral community has been a leader within the world's choral community by fostering the growth of choral organizations, choral composers, conductors, and singers alike. The tradition goes back to 1903, when F. Melius Christiansen was appointed to the music faculty at St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN. It continued to grow throughout the 20th century, thanks in large part to the seeds that were sown by the schools of the Lutheran liberal arts tradition. In the second half of the century a growth within public university and community-based choral programs continued the expansion of Minnesota's choral tradition.

As this tradition has continued to flourish, the profile of the choral composer in Minnesota has changed substantially. For several decades the most prolific choral composers in Minnesota were associated with the Lutheran collegiate choirs they conducted. Currently, some of the most visible composers of the Minnesota choral tradition are earning their living by composing on a full-time basis while not connected with collegiate choral programs. Examples of the former include the following conductors of the St. Olaf Choir: F. Melius Christiansen, Olaf Christiansen, and Kenneth Jennings. Composers Paul J. Christiansen and René Clausen have conducted the Concordia Choir. Leland Sateren and Larry Fleming have conducted the Augsburg Choir. Examples of the latter include Stephen Paulus, Libby Larsen, Carol Barnett, Jocelyn Hagen, Abbie Betinis, J. David Moore, and Elizabeth Alexander.

The Lutheran choral tradition has been studied in great detail and will not be the focus of this paper. Instead, the current study will examine those composers that have been writing on a parallel track. This lineage of composers begins with Dominick Argento, a successful composer and long-time composition instructor at the University of Minnesota. His students include Paulus, Larsen, Barnett, and Craig Carnahan as well as many others who have made lasting contributions to the choral art. The next generation of important choral composers is thriving in the Twin Cities region now, and their impact will be felt for many years to come as they continue to contribute new works to the choral repertoire. These composers include Hagen, Betinis, and Timothy Takach.

Another aspect of the Minnesota choral tradition is the link between successful community-based choral programs and the composers who have found success writing for them. Some of the choral world's strongest advocates for new music are based in the Twin Cities area and have been responsible for commissioning new music from this lineage of composers. Two conductors and organizations, Dale Warland of the Dale Warland Singers and Philip Brunelle of VocalEssence, are responsible for several hundred commissions. These ensembles, together with younger choral groups that share a commitment to new music such as The Singers, the National Lutheran Choir, Magnum Chorum, Choral Arts Ensemble of Rochester, the Rose Ensemble, and the Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus, create an environment in which composers of choral music can thrive. The three generations of composers mentioned above have emerged as a direct result of this choral environment.

This study refers to these three generations as a lineage of composers, though how one generation was influenced by another requires clarification. Their studies with Argento, and his colleagues Paul Fetler and Eric Stokes, at the University of Minnesota influenced the composers

of the second generation. The composers of the third generation did not study directly with the composers of the second. Instead, they were influenced by their exposure to the music of the preceding generations and, in some cases, personal relationships that include informal instruction, encouragement, and mentoring. Nonetheless, the musical traditions are linked clearly enough that the term ‘lineage’ is appropriate when discussing this group of composers.

This paper will examine the music and composers of the first and second generations, as well as the relationship between this entire lineage of composers and the choral organizations of the Twin Cities region. However, the focus will be on an introduction of the music of two composers contributing greatly to the current generation, Jocelyn Hagen and Timothy Takach.

CHAPTER 2. A COMPOSER LINEAGE: THE FIRST AND SECOND GENERATIONS

A lineage of successful Minnesota-based composers includes a first generation represented by Dominick Argento, a second generation represented by Stephen Paulus, Libby Larsen, Carol Barnett, and Craig Carnahan, and the current generation represented by Jocelyn Hagen, Timothy Takach, and Abbie Betinis. Argento's high level of creativity, success in a number of styles, and role as composition instructor to many students at the University of Minnesota make him a logical point of departure.

Representative Composer of the First Generation: Dominick Argento

Dominick Argento was born in York, Pennsylvania in October of 1927. As a child, Argento received no formal musical education. There were no musicians in his family, so his parents had no reason to suspect that young Dominick would find success in the field of musical composition. Some of his first musical explorations were directed toward the music of Stravinsky and Schoenberg, though one of his earliest encounters with classical music was an exposure to the music of George Gershwin.

Argento began studying the piano when he was in high school. In 1947, he entered the Peabody Conservatory of Music in Baltimore as a piano performance major. His technical skills, which perhaps suffered a bit because of his late start, were cause for a change of focus. It was at this point that he began to study composition. While still at Peabody, Argento met Hugo Weisall, a composer who would heavily influence him. Weisall had found success with an opera titled *The Tenor*, and it was this work that may have inspired Argento to spend so much of his career writing in this genre.¹

¹ Lisa Hanson, "Dominick Argento's *Jonah and the Whale*: A Study of the Oratorio and Comparison to Representative Twentieth-Century Oratorios" (DMA thesis, University of Cincinnati, 2001), 2.

Following his studies at Peabody, Argento was the recipient of a Fulbright Scholarship that allowed him to travel to Florence, Italy. While there, he studied composition with Luigi Dallapiccola at the Cherubini Conservatory. He spent 1951 and 1952 abroad and was hired at the Hampton Institute in Virginia upon his return. His doctoral work commenced soon thereafter at the Eastman School of Music, where he studied with Howard Hanson, Bernard Rogers, and Alan Hovhaness. In 1956, Argento returned to Florence for more compositional studies with the assistance of a Guggenheim Fellowship.

In 1958, Argento was hired on very short notice to teach at the University of Minnesota. His colleague for many years on the faculty there was Paul Fetler. Argento said the following of him:

Paul Fetler, when I arrived, was a much better known entity than I was. I was just out of school. Paul I had already heard of – I’d even met some of his music. He had been a student at Yale and had studied with Hindemith and as far as I’m concerned – I’ll be quite frank – the two of us were the primary composition teachers, but I always thought Paul was a much finer teacher than I was. I think it was because of his training and his attitude.²

Although he was uncertain initially about the length of his stay in Minneapolis, situated far from the excitement of both coasts, he and his wife Carolyn grew to not only love the artistic climate, but they became important players in the development of the Minneapolis-St. Paul area’s cultural scene and status. Argento co-founded what is now the Minnesota Opera. He also was involved with the Guthrie Theater. He became a collaborating composer for both the Dale Warland Singers and VocalEssence, two of the most significant choral organizations to the development of the Minnesota choral tradition. To celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Dale Warland Singers, Argento was commissioned to compose his popular score for chorus and

² Dominick Argento, interview with the author, November 1, 2012.

percussion titled *I Hate and I Love*. For their 25th anniversary, Argento was commissioned to compose *Walden Pond*, a multi-movement work for chorus, three celli, and harp. VocalEssence celebrated their 40th anniversary by commissioning Argento to compose “The Choirmaster’s Burial,” a work for a cappella double choir.

Argento is most well known for his choral music and operas. These have been perfect genres for Argento because of his attention to text and his gift for lyricism. Philip Brunelle, the Founder and Artistic Director of VocalEssence, states: “His strengths as a composer? His lyrical gift for melody. His phenomenal grasp of orchestration. His superb ability to take large forms like opera and mold them into a very strong and persuasive whole.”³

Like many 20th and 21st century composers, Argento has experimented with and composed in a variety of styles. He has written some music with serial qualities, but it’s more appropriate to consider the bulk of Argento’s choral music within a tonal and Romantic style in which clarity of text expression is accomplished through a variety of means.

A technique used often by Argento is unison singing (or singing at the octave) in all the choral parts. An example of this technique can be seen in his short a cappella work “Sonnet LXIV”:

³ Patricia Grotts, “Portrait of a Composer,” *Twin Cities* (April 1993): 40.

Example 2.1 Dominick Argento, “Sonnet LXIV,” mm. 24-26

24 *pp* *Meno mosso*

ru - mi - nate ____ That Time will come and take my love a -

pp

ru - mi - nate ____ That Time will come and take my love a -

pp

ru - mi - nate ____ That Time will come and take my love a -

pp

ru - mi - nate ____ That Time will come and take my love a -

Sonnet LXIV by Dominick Argento and William Shakespeare
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Occasionally Argento will double at the octave the sopranos with the tenors and the altos with the basses in a duet texture that can illuminate a text or provide a sense of dialogue. This technique is seen below in an example from “There was a Naughty Boy,” a movement from his suite titled *A Nation of Cowslips*:

Example 2.2 Argento, “There Was a Naughty Boy” from *A Nation of Cowslips*, mm. 1-9

S
There was a naugh - ty Boy, A naugh - ty boy was

A
There was a naugh - ty Boy, A naugh - ty boy was

T
There was a naugh - ty Boy, A naugh - ty boy was

B
There was a naugh - ty Boy, A naugh - ty boy was

5
he, He would not stop at home, *mp* rall. *dim.* *p*

he, He could not qui - et be. *mp* *dim.* *p*

he, He would not stop at home, *mp* rall. *dim.* *p*

he, He could not qui - et be. *mp* *dim.* *p*

There was a Naughty Boy by Dominick Argento and John Keats
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Overall, homophonic choral textures dominate his choral music, and the rhythms are clearly derived from the natural speech inflection of the text. The following example from *Walden Pond* demonstrates this idea. An average singer may be intimidated by figuring out the seemingly intricate rhythms, but Argento has simply notated the natural rhythmic flow of the text

as it is likely to be spoken. Likewise, the use of meter is constantly affected by Argento's use of proper word stresses. It is not at all uncommon to find meter changes in nearly every bar to fit the natural speech inflection that he strives for so diligently.

Example 2.3 Argento, "Observing" from *Walden Pond*, mm. 63-71

63

pond was re-mark-a-bly smooth, so that it was dif-fi-cult to dis-tin-guish its sur-face.

pond was re-mark-a-bly smooth, so that it was dif-fi-cult to dis-tin-guish its sur-face.

pond was re-mark-a-bly smooth, so that it was dif-fi-cult to dis-tin-guish its sur-face.

pond was re-mark-a-bly smooth, so that it was dif-fi-cult to dis-tin-guish its sur-face.

64

I was sur-vised to find my-self sur-round-ed by myr-i-ads of small, bronze col-ored

I was sur-vised to find my-self sur-round-ed by myr-i-ads of small, bronze col-ored

I was sur-vised to find my-self sur-round-ed by myr-i-ads of small, bronze col-ored

I was sur-vised to find my-self sur-round-ed

(continued)

Example 2.3 Argento, “Observing” from *Walden Pond*, mm. 63-71 (continued)

The image displays a musical score for four vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass) from the piece "Observing" in *Walden Pond*. The score is in 2/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: "perch. In such trans-lu-cent wa-ter, re-flect-ing the clouds, I seemed to be float-ing through the". The score includes dynamic markings such as *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *p* (piano), and performance instructions like "sub." (subito) and "perch." (perchance). The music is characterized by polyphonic textures, with each voice part having its own melodic line. The score is numbered 24 at the beginning of each line.

Walden Pond by Dominick Argento and Henry David Thoreau
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Argento also utilizes polyphonic and imitative textures. His compositions demonstrate a thorough understanding of traditional techniques like canonic imitation, chorale, fugue, theme and variations, and the use of binary and ternary forms.⁴ “A Party of Lovers at Tea,” from *A Nation of Cowslips*, is written in ternary form with a fugal middle section on the subject below.

⁴ Hanson, 14.

Example 2.4 Argento, “A Party of Lovers at Tea” from *A Nation of Cowslips*, mm. 16-27

16 *mf* Pen - sive they sit, and roll their lan - guid eyes, — *mp* Nib-ble their

20 toast and cool their tea with sighs, — sighs, — *mf* Or else for - get the pur - pose

24 of the night, For - get the tea, *f* for - get — their ap - pe - tite.

A Party of Lovers at Tea by Dominick Argento and John Keats
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Following the opening statement by the basses, the tenors present the subject at the fifth, the altos at the octave, and the sopranos at the fourth. Once all parts have stated the subject, the texture changes. The sopranos, altos, and tenors sing a descriptive narrative while the basses present the subject once more in a quasi-*cantus firmus* style. All this leads to a recapitulation of the opening section of the piece with the addition of spoken solos by a tenor and bass in dialogue.

Argento’s writing for singers, whether it is in a solo work or a large choral work, is often quite manageable because of his attention to voice-leading and an abundance of stepwise motion. His writing implies a deep understanding of the typical though slightly above-average singer’s capabilities.

Argento’s position as the leader of this lineage has been firmly established by his successes not only within the Midwest region, but also throughout the world. Several of his students at the University of Minnesota have become leading figures in a second generation of composers including Stephen Paulus, Libby Larsen, Carol Barnett, and Craig Carnahan.

Representative Composers of the Second Generation: Stephen Paulus and Libby Larsen

Stephen Paulus is one of the most frequently performed composers living today, having written more than 450 scores for choirs, solo voices, full symphonic orchestras, opera companies, and chamber musicians. Approximately 300 scores are for choir, many of which are multi-movement suites. Nearly 230 of those scores are for mixed choir, 27 are composed for women's voices, 16 for men's voices, and 15 are for unison or 2-part choirs. Approximately half of his choral music includes instruments such as piano, harp, or oboe. A popular combination is harp and oboe as in one of his most popular Christmas pieces, *Three Nativity Carols*.

Paulus is similar to Argento in that his most successful compositions are written for voices. He has the distinction of being the first American to have an opera, *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, performed at the Edinburgh Festival.⁵ In total, he has composed twelve operas. Interestingly, Paulus' most famous choral score, "Pilgrims' Hymn" is from his opera *The Three Hermits*, and has been performed around the world. It was even performed at the funeral of President Reagan.

Paulus has had works commissioned and premiered by many of the leading choirs in Minnesota including the Dale Warland Singers, VocalEssence, The Singers, Choral Arts Ensemble of Rochester, the National Lutheran Choir, and the Rose Ensemble. In June of 2012, Paulus was asked to compose the finale to the opening concert for the 2012 Chorus America Conference held at Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis. Several hundred singers from various choirs in Minnesota at that event performed the resulting work, "When Music Sounds." Besides his obvious ties to the Minnesota musical scene, Paulus has written works for musical organizations

⁵ Stephen Paulus, "Biography," Paulus Publications, <http://www.stephenpaulus.com> (accessed September 15, 2012).

and performers such as the New York Philharmonic, the Cleveland Orchestra, Thomas Hampson, and Doc Severinson.⁶

Paulus’ graduate degrees are from the University of Minnesota where he studied composition with Argento and Paul Fetler. His undergraduate studies were at Macalester College in St. Paul. He spent a short time in the Macalester College Choir under the direction of Dale Warland.

Though the chorister-conductor relationship was brief, the composer-conductor relationship bore much fruit as Paulus began making regular contributions to the repertoire of the Dale Warland Singers. Many of the Christmas carols that Paulus arranged for this choir continue to be performed regularly today. These carols often contain unexpected harmonic twists and turns with surprising chord progressions. The following is a sample from his arrangement of “Joy to the World” that demonstrates this harmonic trait.

Example 2.5 Stephen Paulus, “Joy to the World,” mm. 1-8

♩ = c. 92 With joy and dignity

Sop. Solo (Sop. Solo, Tenor Bass only)

3. He rules the world with truth and grace. And

Soprano Alto

1. Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let
 2. Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let
 3. He rules the world with truth and grace. And

Tenor Bass

(continued)

⁶ Ibid.

Example 2.5 Stephen Paulus, “Joy to the World,” mm. 1-8 (continued)

Sop. Solo
 makes the na - tions prove The glo - - - ries

S
 earth men makes their re - ceive songs her King; ev - - - v'ry
 A
 makes the na - tions prove The glo - - - ries

T
 B

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In general, Paulus’ choral works are syllabic and utilize musical forms that follow the structure of the text. They often feature diatonic chords with added sevenths and ninths, and occasional use of ostinato passages. Word-painting is evident, although the painting of a mood would be a more accurate description of what is accomplished in his scores. The surprising harmonies evident in the early Christmas arrangements appear in more recent works as well as will be shown below. Lastly, as in the music of Argento, the spoken rhythm of language is clearly imitated in the vocal parts of most of Paulus’ scores.

The syllabic nature of his scores can be seen in this passage from “When Music Sounds,” which also features a typical harmonic use of added chord tones to diatonic chords.

Example 2.6 Paulus, “When Music Sounds,” mm. 1-8

When mu - sic sounds, gone is the earth I know, when mu - sic sounds, gone is the earth I know,

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Attention to word or mood-painting can be seen in the same score when the text references the ‘strange dream’ state of the Naiads. At this point, Paulus travels away from the tonal center he has been in throughout the previous sections of the piece.

Example 2.7 Paulus, “When Music Sounds,” mm. 39-51

Nai - ads whose beau - ty dims my wak - ing eyes,

(continued)

Example 2.7 Paulus, “When Music Sounds,” mm. 39-51 (continued)

The image shows a musical score for four voices: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The score is for measures 44 through 51. The lyrics are: "Rapt in strange dream burns each enchanted face,". The dynamics are marked as *p* (piano) at the start of each line, *mp* (mezzo-piano) in the second measure, *cresc...* (crescendo) in the fifth measure, and *mf* (mezzo-forte) in the eighth measure. The music is in a minor key and features a steady, rising melodic line in each voice part.

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“Arise, My Love” was written in honor of Joseph Flummerfelt’s retirement from Westminster Choir College and premiered in 2004. The score includes an ostinato pattern sung by the men. It is used as the harmonic and rhythmic foundation over which the women sing longer note values on the same text as the men (“Arise, my love”). In addition to demonstrating the use of ostinato, this passage is also another example of Paulus’ word painting as the women’s lines rise throughout the phrase.

Example 2.8 Paulus, “Arise, My Love,” mm. 72-77

72 $\text{♩} = 80$

S *p* A - rise my

A *p* A - rise my

T *pp* *poco cresc. . .* *p* A - rise my love, a - rise, a - rise my

B *pp* *poco cresc. . .* *p* A - rise my love, a - rise, a - rise my

75 *mp* *dim. . .*

S love, my love, my love, *dim. . .*

A *mp* love, my love, my love, *dim. . .*

T *poco cresc. . .* *mp* love, a - rise, a - rise my love,

B *poco cresc. . .* *mp* love, a - rise, a - rise my love,

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An example of harmonic surprises that occur in the music of Paulus can be seen in the following example from his arrangement of “We Gather Together.” The piece includes a fairly traditional harmonic palate. Near the end the choir gathers on a unison tone just before a moment of polytonality appears.

Example 2.9 Paulus, "We Gather Together," mm. 69-76

69

S make us free! *f* *mp*

A make us free! *f* *mp*

T make us free! *f* *pp*

B make us free! *f* *pp*

73

S O O Lord! *p*

A O O Lord! *p*

T O, O Lord! *p*

B O, O Lord! *p*

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In 2005, Paulus composed *To Be Certain of the Dawn*, an oratorio written in honor of the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camps and the 40th anniversary of the publication of a Vatican II document, 'Nostra Aetate,' that condemned the blaming of Jews for

the death of Christ.⁷ The piece was jointly commissioned by the Minnesota Orchestra and the Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis and is approximately one hour in duration. It is set for large orchestra, chorus, and four soloists. Like his opera *The Three Hermits*, this work also features a movement that is frequently excerpted titled “Hymn to the Eternal Flame.” It demonstrates a syllabic text setting in a homophonic texture, both of which are frequent musical features in his choral music.

Example 2.10 Paulus, “Hymn to the Eternal Flame” from *To Be Certain of the Dawn*, mm. 1-11

HYMN TO THE ETERNAL FLAME

160 ♩ = 80

S *p* with reverence *poco cresc. . .* *mp* *p*
 Ev - 'ry face is in you, Ev-'ry voice, — Ev-'ry sor - row — in you, Ev-'ry

A *p* with reverence *poco cresc. . .* *mp* *p*
 Ev - 'ry face is in you, Ev-'ry voice, — Ev-'ry sor - row in you, Ev-'ry

T *p* with reverence *poco cresc. . .* *mp* *p*
 Ev - 'ry face is in you, Ev-'ry voice, Ev-'ry sor - row in you, Ev-'ry

B *p* with reverence *poco cresc. . .* *mp* *p*
 Ev - 'ry face is in you, Ev-'ry voice, — Ev-'ry sor - row — in you, Ev-'ry

(continued)

⁷ Ibid.

Example 2.10 Paulus, “Hymn to the Eternal Flame” from *To Be Certain of the Dawn*, mm. 1-11 (continued)

S
 pi - ty, Ev-ry love, _____ Ev -'ry mem-'ry, Wov-en in - to fire.

A
 pi - ty, Ev-ry love, _____ Ev -'ry mem-'ry, Wov-en in - to fire.

T
 pi - ty, Ev-ry love, _____ Ev -'ry mem-'ry, Wov-en in - to fire.

B
 pi - ty, Ev-ry love, _____ Ev -'ry mem-'ry, Wov-en in - to fire.

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Paulus continues to be one of the most performed composers of our time. His new compositions draw much excitement from audiences and many of his pieces are firmly entrenched in the standard choral repertoire being performed around the world.

Libby Larsen’s family moved from Delaware to Minneapolis when she was three years old. Her first musical memories and experiences are of herself as a three-year old girl holding onto the piano as her older sister practiced it and feeling the vibrations that the piano created. According to her website biography, her first compositional experiences were from the same time period in which she crafted “a series of clusters... ordered and restructured.” Later, at age

seven, she began piano lessons of her own. She also attended ballets with her mother as a child and developed a love of dance.⁸

Another early musical influence may have come from the Catholic elementary school that she attended where Gregorian chant was sung on a regular basis. In high school Larsen was exposed to the a cappella tradition of the Lutheran liberal arts college choirs.⁹ She attended the University of Minnesota where she earned her Bachelor of Arts (1971), Master of Arts (1975), and Doctor of Philosophy (1978). Her composition instructors were Argento, Fetler, and Eric Stokes. While in graduate school she met Stephen Paulus. The two of them formed the Minnesota Composers Forum, now the American Composers Forum. Indeed, this spark of creation from two of the era's greatest composers has helped an incalculable number of composers find more success than they ever would have otherwise. The Forum continues to support the work of composers by providing grants and performance opportunities while helping to connect composers, conductors, and choirs around the country. Larsen worked for the Forum until 1987, after which she became a full-time composer.

One of the testaments of Larsen's skills (and Paulus as well) is the fact that she has found success composing for a wide variety of musical forces. Her works include scores written for VocalEssence, the Dale Warland Singers, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, the King's Singers, and Frederica von Stade. Her complete catalogue contains about 400 works, of which more than 100 are choral. She has written more than 60 works for mixed chorus, about 20 of which are a cappella. More than 30 are for treble voices, and five are for men's choirs. The accompanied works feature a wide variety of instrumentations ranging from a piano to full orchestra and a

⁸ Douglas Ralph Boyer, "The Choral Music of Libby Larsen: An Analytical Study of Style." (DMA treatise, University of Texas, 1994), 5.

⁹ Ibid, 7.

variety of smaller ensembles as well. For example, one of her most famous pieces, *The Settling Years*, is for choir, piano, and woodwind quintet. USA Today offered high praise for Larsen saying that she is “the only English-speaking composer since Benjamin Britten who matches great verse with fine music so intelligently and expressively.”¹⁰

About her musical style she says, “In music I want to give the listener not the sound of a bird as much as the feeling of flying; not footsteps on a mountain so much as the sense of climbing.”¹¹ Like Paulus, she is known for having a lyrical musical language influenced by Argento and Fetler. Most composers from this lineage, in fact, have a lyrical nature to their style that was likely inspired by the writing of Argento.

Larsen’s music tends to feature melodic lines in stepwise motion or comprised of notes within the triad as these were the first intervals that she was introduced to as a young singer. Her music also includes a sense of flow that is created by her attention to the natural rhythm of the texts, which she often sets syllabically like both Argento and Paulus. The example below, from “To Sing” for treble voices, showcases these melodic traits in each voice part within the polyphonic texture.

¹⁰ Libby Larsen, “Library,” Libby Larsen, <http://www.libbylarsen.com> (accessed August 28, 2012).

¹¹ Libby Larsen, “The Nature of Music,” *Pan Pipes of Sigma Alpha Iota* 77, (Winter 1985): 3-4.

Example 2.11 Libby Larsen, “To Sing,” mm. 19-25

19

S 1
How man - y notes does a heart em -

S 2
How man - y notes does a heart

A
How man - y notes does a heart em -

Piano

22

ploy. so that the world. sings a song.

em - ploy so that the world, world. sings a song.

loy_ so that the world, world. makes a song.

mf

To Sing by Libby Larsen. © 2010 Hal Leonard Corporation.

Larsen states that her harmonic language is “built around tonal centers that are vaguely modal and reinforced by pedal tones in the bass.”¹² Much like the music of the Renaissance

¹² Libby Larsen, “Library,” Libby Larsen, <http://www.libbylarsen.com> (accessed August 28, 2012).

masters, her harmonies are also conceived as the result of vertical musical action instead of horizontally conceived chord structures.¹³

Below is an example from Larsen's "I Find My Feet Have Further Goals" that features such harmonies being created over the pedal tone in the bass:

Example 2.12 Larsen, "I Find My Feet Have Further Goals," mm. 24-26

24 *a tempo*
Soprano *mf*
I find my feet have fur - ther goals I smile up - on the
Alto *mp* *mf*
Ah, I find my feet have fur - ther goals I smile up -
Tenor *tutti* *mf*
I find my feet have fur - ther goals I smile up -
Bass *mp*
Ah

"I Find My Feet Have Further Goals" music by Libby Larsen, words by Emily Dickinson
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In 1986, Larsen composed a set of contemporary madrigals for the Aspen Music Festival titled *Songs of Youth and Pleasure*. Her program note for the piece, included in the score, states the following:

The technique of madrigal singing occurs to me to be one of the more rewarding challenges for chamber choruses. To leap from key to key, to paint words with delicacy and accuracy, to create a choral blend both expressive and agile – all these things attracted my composing senses to the madrigal tradition.

¹³ Boyer, 73.

The excerpt below, from the movement “Pluck the fruit and taste the pleasure,” includes another example of her shifting harmonies over a pedal tone in the basses as word-painting for the text

“Here on earth nothing is stable, fortune’s changes are well known.”

Example 2.13 Larsen, “Pluck the fruit and taste the pleasure” from *Songs of Youth and Pleasure*, mm. 17-25

17

mp lightly

Here on earth noth-ing is sta - ble, for - tune's chang-es

mp lightly

Here on earth noth-ing is sta - ble, for - tune's chang-es

mp lightly

Here on earth noth-ing is sta - ble, for - tune's chang-es

mp > lightly

Here noth - ing's sta - ble, Ah,

20

mf

are well known, Here on earth noth-ing is sta - ble,

mf

are well known, Here on earth noth-ing is sta - ble,

mf

are well known, Here on earth noth-ing is sta - ble,

mf >

Here noth - ing's sta - ble,

(continued)

Example 2.13 Larsen, “Pluck the fruit and taste the pleasure” from *Songs of Youth and Pleasure*, mm. 17-25 (continued)

23

for-tune's chang - es _____ are well known, while as youth doth

for-tune's chang - es _____ are well known, while as youth doth

for-tune's chang - es _____ are well known, while as youth doth

Ah, _____ while as youth doth

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Larsen's skillful word-painting also can be seen in the movement "Hey Nonny No!" from *Songs of Youth and Pleasure*. The next example shows the basses singing the melodic material with the sopranos, altos, and tenors enhancing the text with flourishes on "blow" and "flow." The ideas of Renaissance madrigal composers, translated into a more contemporary harmonic language, are clearly seen.

Example 2.14 Larsen, "Hey Nonny No!" from *Songs of Youth and Pleasure*, mm. 51-56

51

blow, flow, blow, flow, and the seas do flow,

54

blow, flow, blow, flow, when the winds do blow, and the seas do flow

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This second generation of composers includes a number of other prominent composers, but it is clear that Stephen Paulus and Libby Larsen's contributions to the choral genre, both in qualitative and quantitative measures, make them stand out as leaders among their peers.

Furthermore, their shared efforts with the creation of the Minnesota Composers Forum have been valuable to thousands of other composers around the country.

Additional Composers of the Second Generation: Carol Barnett and Craig Carnahan

Besides Paulus and Larsen, several other composers from this generation have found success writing for choral ensembles within Minnesota, especially in the Twin Cities area. These composers, including Carol Barnett and Craig Carnahan, also have had works commissioned and performed throughout the country for a wide array of choral and/or instrumental forces.

Carol Barnett studied composition with both Argento and Fetler while at the University of Minnesota, and she is a charter member of the Minnesota Composers Forum. She was the composer-in-residence for the Dale Warland Singers from 1992 to 2001, a partnership that resulted in more than twenty works, including a number of folk-song and spiritual arrangements. To date, Barnett has written nearly 80 choral works, including multi-movement suites. More than 65 of those works are for mixed choir, ten are for treble voices, and two are for men's choir.

Barnett composed *The World Beloved: A Bluegrass Mass* as a commission for VocalEssence and Monroe Crossing, a Twin Cities-based bluegrass band. It was premiered in 2006 by those performing forces with Philip Brunelle conducting. The work features movements from the Mass Ordinary and additional texts by writer Marisha Chamberlain, who wrote poetic paraphrases of the Kyrie, Gloria, and Credo. The libretto retains the traditional Latin texts for the Sanctus and Agnus Dei. In between all the standard movements of the mass are verses to a ballad that are short commentaries. The texts of these verses allude to the original sin of Eve as well as the events of 9/11/01 and Hurricane Katrina. The text in the third verse begins with the words, "The skies exploded, towers fell. The floods came rushing down." Several solos appear within the choral texture. The choir parts contain *divisi* at several points. The bluegrass band consists of

fiddle, banjo, mandolin, acoustic guitar, and string bass. Following the Agnus Dei, the only a cappella movement in the piece, there is an interlude for the ensemble that is based on the popular bluegrass tune “Art Thou Weary?” The mass is one of Barnett’s most popular pieces and has been performed by a wide variety of ensembles including church, community, and collegiate choirs.

Another major work by Barnett is *Verba Ultima*, for choir and soprano saxophone, which she calls a choral mini-drama.¹⁴ The Dale Warland Singers commissioned the score in 1999. It is a modern setting of the seven last words of Christ on the cross, short statements spoken by Jesus during the crucifixion and gathered from all four gospels. In Barnett’s setting, these statements are sung in both English and Latin accompanied by a solo soprano saxophone acting both independently and in partnership with the choir. The harmonic language is strikingly dissonant at times because of the emotional content of the text. At other moments the voices sing in unison or at the octave. The final two bars of the piece feature an example of this as the choir sings “righteous man” on octave Gs. There also is a spoken section for the choir when they chant the text “crucifige illum,” which translates as “crucify him.”

Barnett’s catalogue of choral works features a great deal of Americana. One of her most successful works, *An American Thanksgiving*, is in three movements featuring hymns taken from the Sacred Harp collection. Of this score Barnett says the following:

An American Thanksgiving was commissioned by the Dale Warland Singers for their final season, and premiered on November 1, 2003. The concert had a Thanksgiving theme, and I picked the three hymns for their compatible texts and compelling melodies. I have tried to

¹⁴ Carol Barnett, “Compositions,” Beady Eyes Publishing, <http://www.carolbarnett.net> (accessed September 8, 2012).

stay close to the wonderful spirited rhythms and elemental, forthright harmonies of the original settings found in the Sacred Harp collection.¹⁵

In addition to *An American Thanksgiving*, she has arranged popular folk-songs and spirituals including “Deep River,” “Steal Away,” “Red River Valley,” “Oh, Yes!,” and “Cindy.” These arrangements feature interesting rhythms that are often a result of a change in beats per measure or the switch from duple to compound subdivisions of the beat. Although many of Barnett’s works have been championed in Minnesota, her music is frequently heard throughout the country.

Craig Carnahan received his B.A. from Concordia College in Moorhead, MN and did graduate work at the University of Minnesota where he studied with Argento and Fetler. His music has been commissioned or premiered by several choirs in Minnesota, including the Dale Warland Singers, Choral Arts Ensemble of Rochester, The Singers, and the Twin Cities Gay Men’s Chorus. Additionally, he has been commissioned by Kantorei (Denver, CO), Conspirare (Austin, TX) and more than 30 GALA choirs across the country.¹⁶ Carnahan is also a successful choral conductor, having served as the Artistic Director and Conductor of the Twin Cities Gay Men’s Chorus from 1994-2000. He currently is the Vice President of Programs for the American Composers Forum. He has written more than 20 works for mixed choir, 14 original scores and arrangements for men’s choirs, and three scores for women’s choirs. His works tend to be for a cappella choir, though several works include accompaniments for piano, organ, and/or harp.

Carnahan’s music features a strong sense of lyricism and melody, both of which are framed within a diatonic context. His harmonies also are based within a diatonic scheme, though he frequently colors the chords with non-traditional tones such as the second/ninth. The formal

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Craig Carnahan, “Biography,” Craig Carnahan, <http://www.craigcarnahan.com> (accessed Sept 30, 2012).

structures of his music often are built around repeated sections of music, as in his score “Thou Shalt Know Him When He Comes.” His close attention to the text results in word-painting or even complete changes of mood as dictated by the words. His experiences within the choral genre as both a composer and a conductor make this aspect of his compositions one of the strongest elements of his work.

Another of Carnahan’s gifts is his ability to choose interesting and engaging texts. For his score “Bur Oaks,” Carnahan used a prose text from a book by Donald Peattie titled *A Natural History of North American Trees*. In his program note about the piece he writes:

As someone who grew up on the Great Plains of the Midwest, I’ve long been fascinated by why the original settlers picked this spot to end their Western trek and declare themselves home. No doubt the reasons were many, but it’s hard to ignore the impact that coming upon the towering Bur Oaks – the ‘cathedrals on the prairie’ as my mother refers to them – must have made. How could they not have felt that any land rich enough to sustain these majestic trees would also provide the ideal setting to put down their roots and raise their families? It is that metaphor that Donald Colross Peattie captured so vividly in his book. And far from the purely scientific account the title suggests, the language Peattie used and the rhythmical structure of his words read like poetry. In his hands, this is as much a lyrical ode as it is an academic text.¹⁷

The opening of “Bur Oaks” includes a musical representation of the setting of roots with octave drops in all four voice parts as seen in the following example:

¹⁷ Craig Carnahan, *Bur Oaks*, (Minneapolis, MN: manuscript, 2010), 1.

Example 2.15 Craig Carnahan, “Bur Oaks,” mm. 1-7

Intense and driven $\text{♩} = 66$

Soprano
Alto
Tenor
Bass

Bur Oaks, Bur

f *ff* *no dim.*

This excerpt reprinted with permission. © Craig Carnahan.

Furthermore, the idea of the roots growing and spreading through the ground is seen in this example that features more stepwise motion than the previous octave drops:

Example 2.16 Carnahan, “Bur Oaks,” mm. 8-13

S
A
T

Oaks, Bur Oaks, Oaks, Bur

f

This excerpt reprinted with permission. © Craig Carnahan.

Moments of homophony draw attention to specific and important moments of text, as in the example below:

Example 2.17 Carnahan, “Bur Oaks,” mm. 54-64

Warmly and more relaxed
mp

S
A
T
B

And that is the ex - pla - na - tion, — And that is the ex - pla -
And that is the ex - pla -
And that is the ex - pla -
And that is the ex - pla -

54

59

na - tion of the Oak o - pen - ings, the wide-spaced rooms —
na - tion of the Oak o - pen - ings, the wide-spaced rooms —
na - tion of the Oak o - pen - ings, the wide-spaced rooms — with a
na - tion of the Oak o - pen - ings, — where men drew their wagons to a stop with a

This excerpt reprinted with permission. © Craig Carnahan.

Carnahan’s attention to text and the metaphor he described in his note above can be seen musically when the text changes to state, “Here I will build me a house.” He utilizes the same octave leaps that earlier represented the settling of the roots.

Example 2.18 Carnahan, “Bur Oaks,” mm. 73-78

The musical score shows four vocal parts: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The music is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The lyrics are: "Here will I build me a house; here will my children grow up." The score includes dynamic markings of *mf* and *f*, and a crescendo hairpin. The Soprano part starts with a rest in measure 73. The Alto and Tenor parts have a rest in measure 74. The Bass part has a rest in measure 75. The lyrics are: "Here will I build me a house; here will my children grow up."

This excerpt reprinted with permission. © Craig Carnahan.

At the conclusion, the choir comes together in a homophonic texture to present the key text of the work: "... and look to them the mansions that they are. Here will I build me a house; here will my children grow up."

The harmonic language used throughout the piece is characteristically diatonic with added chord tones that increase the color palate. The rhythmic flow of the text is enhanced by shifting time signatures that allow the stresses of the syllables to fall in properly musical places.

As with Barnett and Paulus, Carnahan has also done a fair amount of composing within the folk-song genre. He has arranged popular tunes such as "This Little Light of Mine," "The Hills are Bare at Bethlehem," and "Johnny has Gone for a Soldier." The Singers, conducted by Matthew Culloton, premiered the setting of a lesser-known folk song from the Georgian Islands, titled "Yonder Come Day," in 2012.

Many of the musical traits and styles that we see in the music of Paulus, Larsen, Barnett, and Carnahan were passed onto them by the great composer of the first generation of this lineage, Dominick Argento. He, whether through formal study, proximity, or exposure to his

music, has influenced all four. His influence seen in the scores for vocal forces include a sense of lyricism, great attention paid to rhythmic text settings, and the use of unison, octave, or two-part textures. These same attributes continue to filter down into a third generation of composers linked to this lineage.

CHAPTER 3. A COMPOSER LINEAGE: THE THIRD GENERATION

A third generation of choral composers has emerged and its members are becoming recognized for their contributions to choral music. This group of composers continues the lineage, though they are not students of previously discussed composers. Instead, the third generation has been influenced by their exposure and proximity to music of the first and second generations. It is led by three in particular, two of whom will be discussed in detail as representative composers of this generation: Jocelyn Hagen and Timothy Takach. The third composer is Abbie Betinis. Because her work has been studied in more detail in other papers, only a brief introduction is necessary.

Betinis was born in 1980 and is a graduate of St. Olaf College. Her works feature more experimental tendencies than the works of her colleagues, especially with regard to the use of vocal techniques such as crying, glottal grunts, whistling, and even spitting. Her text selections also have been innovative. She has delved into pre-Christian Gaelic keening (wailing in grief to lament the loss of loved ones), ancient Greek binding spells, and American shape-note singing.¹⁸ The resulting pieces have garnered her much attention throughout the country, and she has received many commissions from leading choirs including the Dale Warland Singers, The Esoterics, The Singers, Cantus, and the Rose Ensemble. Additional commissions have come from the Minnesota Music Educators Association and the New England Philharmonic. She is adept at composing for instrumentalists and vocalists alike as her broad catalogue shows.

Betinis earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in music from St. Olaf College and her Masters of Arts in composition from the University of Minnesota, where she studied with Judith Lang Zaimont. She has also studied harmony and counterpoint at the European American Musical

¹⁸ Abbie Betinis, "Biography," Abbie Betinis Music Company, <http://www.abbiebetinis.com> (accessed October 2, 2012).

Alliance in Paris, France. She was awarded the prestigious McKnight Composer Fellow prize in 2009 as well as a number of composition contest prizes or grants from organizations including The Esoterics and the American Composers Forum.¹⁹ She has also been recognized with more than fifty commissions from all around the United States.

Betinis' choral output includes more than a dozen works for treble voices, two works for SAB choir, four pieces for men's chorus, and nearly forty works for mixed choir. Most of her pieces for mixed choir are a cappella. The accompanied works for choir include parts for piano, brass groups, string ensembles, and obbligato instruments such as flute and percussion. Examples of the latter are "Cedit, Hyems" for mixed choir and flute and "Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight" for men's chorus and snare drum.

Noteworthy scores for a cappella choir are "Bar xizam (Upward I Rise)" for mixed choir and soli, "Carmina mei cordis (Songs of my Heart)" for mixed choir, and "Long Time Trav'ling" for mixed choir and soli and featured at the 2011 national conference of the American Choral Directors Association in a performance by The Singers. Of additional interest is her relationship to the famous composer of carols, Alfred Burt. Burt is Betinis' great uncle and, continuing in his tradition, Betinis composes an annual carol that is sent out as her holiday greeting card. Since 2001, Betinis, along with a small vocal ensemble, has recorded the new carol at Minnesota Public Radio where it is later premiered on the air and played during the holiday season.

Betinis has clearly emerged as one of the leaders of this new generation of composers and her music is getting a fair amount of attention around the country.

Representative Composer of the Third Generation: Jocelyn Hagen

Jocelyn Hagen was born on April 19, 1980 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Her father completed his dental school boards at the University of Minnesota, bought a dental practice, and

¹⁹ Ibid.

moved his family to Valley City in North Dakota all in the same week of her birth. It was in Valley City that Hagen was raised and educated, and it is where her parents still live.

Hagen began piano lessons at an early age, studying with her mother for many years. Her mother, Sara, taught piano while Hagen was young before joining the music faculty at Valley City State University. She currently teaches music education methods and music theory courses. While in second grade, Hagen was skilled enough to accompany the Washington Elementary choir performances. It was at the piano that Hagen started to experiment with composition, though serious compositional efforts were still years away. Her musical upbringing also included playing trumpet and horn in the school bands, singing in the choirs, and participating in musical theater productions. During her senior year at Valley City High School she took a music theory course at Valley City State University that was taught by her mother. She also played in the college's band where she and her mother made up the horn section.

It was during her junior high and high school years that Hagen started to feel that music would be her career path. She speaks of the important personal experiences and discoveries leading to her recognition of the role music would play in her life:

I think it was pretty obvious starting in high school that making music was what I wanted to do. I went through a rough time in junior high because my mom had been my piano teacher – and once you get into junior high that relationship starts to suffer – and so I needed a new teacher. It took me awhile to find the right teacher and I had a tough time. I was losing interest and my mom forced me to stay with it, which I'm very grateful for, and then two things happened. First, I found a fantastic teacher, Marge Tjon, and she was old then – in her 80s – and she kept teaching for another ten years after that. She was a fantastic teacher and she really got me. So that happened, and I started writing. I started improvising on the piano

and writing songs, so both of those things kind of happening when I was 14 or 15 really changed me around and got me back into music.²⁰

Hagen was a senior at Valley City High School when her choir teacher, Cindy Peterson, encouraged her to compose a piece for the women's choir. The result was "Evening Star," a setting of a text by Edgar Allen Poe.

Following high school, Hagen enrolled at St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN. She sang in Manitou Singers, the first-year women's chorus, before transferring to Arizona State University the first semester of her sophomore year. She soon returned to St. Olaf where she sang in the Chapel Choir conducted by Robert Scholz. She graduated Magna Cum Laude in 2003 with bachelor of music degrees in Theory/Composition and Vocal Music Education. Her composition instructors at St. Olaf were Peter Hamlin and Timothy Mahr, the latter being the director of bands as well. Her master of arts degree is in composition. She earned it at the University of Minnesota where she studied with Judith Lang Zaimont and Doug Geers. Hagen says of her experiences with Zaimont: "She's amazing and an incredible teacher and I learned a lot from her, especially about craft, especially when it came to pacing of music. She really refined my piano writing, too, because she's a wonderful pianist herself. She's [a] very meticulous, detail oriented, in-the-score teacher who taught me to be very precise and get things the way I wanted them."²¹

In 2005, Hagen participated in the European American Musical Alliance summer program where she studied counterpoint and harmony with Philip Lasser. She also took composition lessons with Mary Ellen Childs on an independent basis. Hagen says the following about her time with Childs:

²⁰ Jocelyn Hagen, interview with the author, October 22, 2012.

²¹ Ibid.

Another composer that I'm close to and consider a mentor here is Mary Ellen Childs. I think she is a brilliant composer who doesn't write much for the voice or much for choir. She has some pieces, but it's not her forte and I love that about her. So when I'd have my lessons with her, which I did on and off for several years, the conversations were just completely different and I was thinking about things in a totally different way than I was used to. She's really into movement-based work. She has a percussion ensemble called Crash and my favorite piece she does includes the performers in desk chairs rolling around and hitting drums. It's really amazing! She completely thinks outside the box and very theatrically, and I love that about her work.²²

For the last several years, Hagen has maintained a piano studio one day a week. She taught orchestration in 2007 and 2009 as an adjunct professor at St. Catherine University in St. Paul. The relationship with St. Catherine University began when their women's choir participated in a consortium commission of a work composed by Hagen. After its premiere performance the choir's director, Patricia Connors, contacted Hagen about writing a piano reduction of the score so that her choir could tour with the piece later that year. Hagen continues:

And then it was the next year that she (Connors) hired me to teach orchestration at St. Kate's, which is really more of an instrumentation, scoring, and arranging class, and it was a lot of fun. And there is no better way to learn that material than to teach it. It was a class that was only offered every other year in the spring, so I did that twice. That's my one adjunct faculty position. And then that's when she decided to do *Ashes of Roses* and commission the re-orchestration and completion of it, so I was a composer-in-residence for that year

²² Ibid.

(2010-11) and there was the Jocelyn Hagen Festival! That's one of those things I can't even say with a straight face!²³

Hagen has found a great deal of success in her first decade as a professional composer. She has served as composer-in-residence since 2004 for The Singers. In 2004-05 she took part in an American Composers Forum program titled 'Composers in the Schools' at St. Paul Central High School. She has also held composer-in-residence positions at Valley City State University in 2006-07, Shorter College in Rome, Georgia in 2008-09, and St. Catherine University in 2010-2011. In 2010, she was awarded a McKnight Artist Fellowship as well as a project grant through the Minnesota State Arts Board to compose a piece for the Metropolitan Orchestra. She has won composition contests sponsored by VocalEssence, the Yale Glee Club, and the San Francisco Song Festival. Commissions also have come from a variety of institutions including The St. Olaf Band, Cantus, the American Choral Directors Association of Minnesota, The Murasaki Duo (cello and harp), North Dakota State University School of Music, and The WomenVoice Festival.

The majority of Hagen's compositions are for vocal forces, ranging from solo voice art songs and song cycles to large choral ensembles, both a cappella and accompanied. She has written five song cycles including *Songs of Fields and Prairies*, for soprano and piano, which won the San Francisco Song Festival Composition Contest (Student Division) and received an honorable mention in the ASCAP/Lotte Lehmann Song Cycle Competition in 2005.

Hagen's catalogue includes nearly three-dozen works for choirs, more than half of which are for mixed choir. Of these twenty works for mixed choir, fifteen are for a cappella choir and five are accompanied. She has composed eleven works for women's voices, nine of which are

²³ Ibid.

accompanied. She has one score for male voices, titled “of you,” an a cappella piece commissioned and premiered by Cantus. The accompaniments for mixed and women’s voices include only piano in several cases. Some include solo obbligato parts for violin, viola, cello, and oboe. She has also written for a number of percussion instruments in her extended work titled *amass*, as well as in a score titled “Moon Goddess” for women’s voices completed in 2011.

Ashes of Roses and *amass* are her two major works. *Ashes of Roses* is a Requiem that was written and premiered in 2003 by a collection of student volunteers at St. Olaf College. A revision was commissioned by the St. Catherine Choral Society in 2011, for which Hagen added two additional movements and an updated scoring for full orchestra and solo soprano saxophone. The updated version is approximately 50 minutes in duration and consists of several traditional movements from the Requiem mass along with spiritual poetry. The combination of sacred and secular texts is a technique that Hagen revisits in *amass*. Because of the importance of *amass* in the life and work of Hagen, it is discussed in greater detail below.

Jocelyn Hagen: Compositional Process and Musical Traits

Hagen’s compositional process varies from piece to piece, but she begins with a conversation with the commissioning party that allows her to understand the function and purpose of the new work. She especially appreciates knowing if the new work will close or open a concert, or if it is intended to be an anchor piece for a major portion of the performance. Once that information is received, the focus goes to text selection.

Hagen, like all good composers of choral music, utilizes word-painting within her compositions. She says:

I definitely think about it when I’m reading the text... when I’m trying to decide which texts I want to compose to or set. If there are too many descriptive words that would facilitate

obvious word-painting then I'm turned off a little bit. It seems like there is a right amount of how much word-painting there is to do in any given piece –it's something I have to be careful of because I don't ever want to over-do it.²⁴

Even more relevant to her compositional style is the musical portrayal of an overall mood rather than aiming for every instance of obvious word-painting. Indeed, it is the sense of mood that also appeals to her when examining potential texts. She says: “There is some amazing poetry that I really love that I don't think I could set adequately to music because there are too many moods – I wouldn't know what to do with it ... it just doesn't need music. It's already so much on its own. If I don't think I can add to it, I don't want to set it.”²⁵

Eventually, Hagen will submit three or four texts to the commissioning party. She includes a short write-up of what she thinks the style and general spirit of the piece would be. When working with high school and collegiate choirs, Hagen has invited choirs to select the text by a voting process, which she enjoys a great deal. “I think that's a lot of fun because it gives the choirs more of an investment from the very beginning,” Hagen states.²⁶

Her work crafting the piece then begins in earnest. She does much of her work away from the piano or computer. She moves to the piano primarily to notate ideas that have solidified into concrete thematic material. Ironically, it's because of her background as a pianist that she tries to avoid writing at the piano too much. Hagen says: “I used to always begin at the piano, but I'm trying to change it up and not let my fingers always find the notes because as a pianist my fingers have patterns, which is evident in my piano writing.”²⁷

²⁴ Jocelyn Hagen, interview with the author, November 7, 2012.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

Though the majority of her composing is with manuscript paper and pencil, Hagen will occasionally compose at the computer. She said the following:

There are pieces where I get to a moment where I can't hear all the lines or play all the lines and I think it's time to switch it over so I can get the feedback and playback. It's interesting because in college and even graduate school it was such a *faux pas* to sit at the computer and write. A lot of young composers are guilty of cut and paste. After I got my master's degree and was studying with Mary Ellen Childs I asked her that question and she said 'I do it all at the computer now.' I thought that was interesting and it's because she had gotten past the young composer stage where you are trying to fill in and every moment was crafted. So now I don't feel badly about it. When I get to a certain point I know I need to turn it over.²⁸

A key musical element that gets attention early in Hagen's compositional process is the use of texture, and specifically what textures she may employ throughout the work. She will examine the text for possibilities that include obvious textures like men alternating with women or the high voices of the tenors and sopranos in contrast to the low voices of the basses and altos. She also considers the use of both homophonic and polyphonic textures as well as potential moments of reduced or thickened choral voicings. She then determines how the instrumentation, if any, will be applied throughout the score. The textures in her music are rich and varied, as the musical examples to follow in this chapter will show.

Hagen enjoys experimenting with rhythm a great deal as she is composing. One of her most definitive traits is the use of a thick rhythmic texture that often will include a variety of layers within the vocal ensemble creating a sense of constant flow. This example is from the "Sanctus" from her large work *amass* and shows this variety of rhythmic gestures:

²⁸ Ibid.

still think of that when I'm writing and feel like if I have too much happening on all the downbeats that I need to switch things up.²⁹

An example of this idea can be seen in her score "Laus Trinitati." This work was the winner of the 2005 Yale Glee Club Emerging Composer Competition and was written while Hagen was studying with Zaimont. The example below demonstrates how Hagen shifts the sopranos, altos, and basses away from the downbeat, thus adding the element of syncopation due to the negated downbeat.

Example 3.2 Hagen, "Laus Trinitati," mm. 1-7

Joyfully, ♩. = 52 - 58

Soprano
Laus Tri - ni - ta - ti, Laus Tri - ni -

Alto
Laus Tri - ni - ta - ti, Laus Tri - ni -

Tenor
Laus Tri - ni - ta - ti, Laus Tri -

Bass
Laus Tri - ni - ta - ti, Laus Tri - ni -

(continued)

²⁹ Ibid.

Example 3.2 Hagen, “Laus Trinitati,” mm. 1-7 (continued)

4 *subito p*
 ta - ti, que so - nus et vi - ta, que so - nus

subito p
 ta - ti, que so - nus et vi - ta, que so - nus

mf
 - ni - ta - ti, Laus Tri - ni - ta - ti, Laus, -

p
 ta - ti, Laus Tri - ni - ta - ti, Laus Tri - ni -

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Another technique that Hagen uses to propel the rhythmic quality of a work is the setting of repeated text, which she especially utilized throughout the Latin texts of the mass Ordinary found in her score titled *amass*. “...*amass* was liberating in that way, though, because there was a lot of Latin and so much became about the music independent from the text. And I really enjoyed that,” she says.³⁰ The next example is from the opening of the “Gloria”, which begins with 28 measures using only that single word.

³⁰ Ibid.

Example 3.3 Hagen, “Gloria” from *amass*, mm. 1-2

The musical score is for two choirs, Choir 1 and Choir 2. Each choir has four parts: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The lyrics for all parts are "Glo - ri - a". The music is in 4/4 time and features a complex rhythmic pattern of triplets. The tempo is marked "Rapid & Light" with a quarter note equal to 126. The dynamics are marked "f" (forte). The score is divided into two systems, each with four staves per choir. The lyrics are "Glo - ri - a" repeated four times in each system.

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Another example of this technique can be seen in the following example from the “Sanctus”:

Example 3.4 Hagen, “Sanctus” from *amass*, mm. 35-38

Example 3.4 is a musical score for a choral setting of "Sanctus" from the piece *amass* by Jocelyn Hagen, measures 35-38. It features six staves: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), Bass (B), Bass (B), and Piano (P). The top staff (Soprano) starts with a measure number of 35 and a dynamic marking of *p*. It includes a *Gliss.* marking. The lyrics for the Soprano are "Sanc - - - - - tus, Sanc - - -". The Alto staff has the lyrics "Sanc - - - - - tus, Sanc-tus, Sanc - tus,". The Tenor staff has the lyrics "Sanc-tus, Sanc-tus, ___ Sanc-tus, Sanc-tus, Sanc - - - - - - - - - - - tus,". The Bass staff has the lyrics "Sanc - tus, Sanc - tus, Sanc - tus, Sanc - tus, Sanc - tus, Sanc -". The bottom staff (Piano) has the lyrics "Sanc - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - tus, Sanc - tus,". Dynamics include *p* and *pp*. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and ties.

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Hagen also utilizes rhythmic ostinatos, or what she calls “grooves,” in several of her pieces. “On My Dreams,” which was composed for the Valley City High School Choir, employs such a ‘groove’ in the piano part throughout most of the work. The example below shows the pattern:

Example 3.5 Hagen, “On My Dreams,” mm. 1-2

Example 3.5 is a musical score for the piano accompaniment of “On My Dreams” by Jocelyn Hagen, measures 1-2. It consists of two staves: the upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef, both in 4/4 time. The upper staff is marked *static* and contains a rhythmic ostinato pattern. The lower staff is marked *mp* and contains a melodic line. A *without pedal* marking is present at the bottom of the lower staff.

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An example of this same rhythmic concept appears in “No Rain,” a score commissioned by Choral Arts Ensemble of Rochester, MN in 2006. The women of the chorus sing the ostinato, which in this case includes slight variations in rhythmic durations.

Example 3.6 Hagen, “No Rain,” mm. 3-8

The musical score shows two staves: Soprano and Alto. Both are in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat. The Soprano part starts with a triplet of quarter notes (G4, A4, B4) marked with a '3' above the staff and a 'p' dynamic. The Alto part starts with a quarter note (G4) followed by eighth notes (A4, B4, A4, G4). Both parts feature a 'nn...' marking below the staff, indicating a non-measure rest. The Soprano part has a fermata over the final measure, while the Alto part continues with eighth notes.

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Later in the score she places new patterns in the alto, tenor, and bass parts to support a women’s solo trio.

Hagen says that she is “often drawn to compound meters.”³¹ Within these compound meters she regularly sets subdivisions of two against three, which adds to the complexity of the music. This example from “I Saw Two Clouds at Morning” demonstrates the concurrent use of both duple and triple subdivisions.

³¹ Ibid.

Example 3.7 Hagen, "I Saw Two Clouds at Morning," mm. 28-37

28 *simile*
Ab *Ab* *Ab* *Ab* *Ab*
mp *Ha** *Ha* *Ha* *p* *Ha*
2 *2* *2* *2* *2*
saw two sum-mer cur - rents — Flow smooth - ly to their meet - ing, — And join their course, with
nothing *mf* *2*
And join their course, with

33 *mp*
Ab *Ha** *Ha*
mp
Ab *Ab*
2 *2* *mp* *2*
si-lent force, — In peace — each o - ther greet - ing: —
mp
si-lent force, — In peace — each o - ther greet - ing: —

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Hagen's melodic writing is often conservative and held to stepwise motion within a diatonic system, although large leaps do appear, especially sevenths. She is careful to resolve leaps appropriately and also to avoid consecutive ones. Her skills as a vocalist are evident in such writing. She also employs leaps of a ninth but recognizes that "the ninths are hard for singers, so I usually use them more in my instrumental music."³² The following two examples demonstrate her writing for voices that involves larger leaps:

Example 3.8. Hagen, "No Rain," mm. 26-28

26

Soprano
 Alto
 Tenor
 Bass

Now you are two per - sons
 Now you are two per - sons
 Now you are two per - sons but there's on - ly one life
 Now you are two per - sons but there's on - ly one life

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³² Ibid.

Example 3.9 Hagen, “See Amid the Winter Snow,” mm. 10-21

10
Lamb ap-pears, Pro - mised from e - ter - nal years. Hail, —

14
hail, — thou ev - er - bless - ed morn! Hail, re - demp - tion's hap - py dawn!

18
Sing - through all Je - ru - sa - lem, — Christ is born in Beth - le - hem, —

mf

slight rit.

slight rit.

a tempo

rit.

a tempo

rit.

See Amid the Winter Snow by Jocelyn Hagen and Edward Caswell
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The harmonic foundation of Hagen’s music tends to be rooted in modal systems, with a propensity towards the Lydian and Mixolydian scales. She explains it this way:

I love to create modes and figure out interesting ways to go between them. Often when I'm writing I don't think about what key I'm using. I just start writing and eventually the key will emerge to me. I like to find that in a roundabout way instead of thinking "I'm in this key."³³

Furthermore, there is a strong tendency to anchor the harmonies with a fifth in the low voices or in the arpeggios in a piano part. Hagen says:

If you look around my works, I think it's obvious that everything is built around the fifth. Not only do I land on it a lot in melodies, but I also use lots of fifths – open fifths – in the way chords are spaced or in piano parts and that's just where my brain goes. It's actually where my fingers go naturally and it's also what I like to hear.³⁴

An example of this compositional trait occurs in the opening bars of the "Benedictus" movement from *amass*. Hagen treats these opening measures as an ostinato to which many layers are added throughout the movement.

Example 3.10 Hagen, "Benedictus" from *amass*, mm. 1-9

Steady Largo, ♩ = 48-52
p

T
 Be-ne - dic - tus, Be-ne-dic - tus qui ve - nit in no-mi-

B
p
 Be-ne - dic - tus, Be-ne-dic - tus qui ve - nit in no-mi-

(continued)

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

Example 3.10 Hagen, “Benedictus” from *amass*, mm. 1-9 (continued)

ne Do - mi - ni. Be - ne - dic - tus, Be - ne - dic -

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One reason that Hagen has become such a well-respected composer is her willingness to experiment with a variety of vocal techniques. One such technique is a vocal trill. It is executed by dividing one of the choral sections into three parts with two of the sections sustaining two different pitches with the third section then trilling between the two sustained notes. This can be seen in “No Rain”:

Example 3.11 Hagen, “No Rain,” mm. 1-4 (tenors)

Oh...

** Tenors are split into three parts. Top tenors hold G, bottom tenors hold F, middle tenors trill between the F and the G.

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Also seen and heard in “No Rain” is the use of free-tempo, or aleatoric, singing. Examples of this technique, from “No Rain” and “Laus Trinitati,” can be seen in the following excerpts:

Example 3.12 Hagen, “No Rain,” mm. 1-5 (soloists)

The musical score consists of three staves, each for a different soloist. The top staff is for 'Sop solo 1', the middle for 'Sop solo 2', and the bottom for 'Alto solo'. Each staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 4/4 time signature. The first measure of each staff contains a melodic line with notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. The second measure contains a vocal line with the lyrics 'nn...' and a horizontal line underneath. The first measure is marked with a dynamic of *p** and the second measure with *(continuous)*. The score ends with a double bar line and a fermata-like symbol.

*Soloists repeat this one measure pattern over and over, taking breaths when necessary, at steady, independent tempos that may or may not correlate to the conductor’s tempo.

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Example 3.13 Hagen, “Laus Trinitati,” mm. 24-26

24 * $\text{♩} = 46$ or slower *mp* ** *cresc.* (continuous)

Et que laus an - ge - li - ce,

p *cresc.*

ce,

mp **

Et que laus an - ge - li - ce,

p *cresc.*

ce,

mp ** (continuous)

Et que laus an - ge - li - ce,

p *cresc.*

ce,

mp **

Et que laus an - ge - li - ce,

p *cresc.*

ce,

* Measures 24-30 should last about a minute, with very slow and steady crescendos and descrescendos. The *Laus Trinitati* solo at m. 27 in the lower parts should seem to come from out of the distance, by as few voices as possible (an uneven split).

** 5 or 6 voices for each part, enter randomly, at various tempi with freedom in rhythmic interpretation, repeating as necessary.

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Another technique employed with some regularity is the use of *portamento* and/or *glissando* in entire sections of choir. This provides an eerie sound quality that is not ubiquitous in choral music today. The following two examples from “Gloria” demonstrate this technique and its notation:

Example 3.14 Hagen, "Gloria" from *amass*, mm. 69-74

Musical score for Example 3.14, measures 69-74. The score is in 4/4 time and features a piano accompaniment with triplets in both hands. The tempo is marked "Mm...".

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Example 3.15 Hagen, "Gloria" from *amass*, mm. 123-130

Musical score for Example 3.15, measures 123-130. The score is in 4/4 time and features a piano accompaniment with sliding chords. The tempo is marked "Mm...". The lyrics "Et in ter - ra pax ho -" are written below the piano part.

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amass

Hagen's largest undertaking to date is a score entitled *amass*. This setting of the Ordinary texts of the mass also includes texts from other sources. These additional texts are all from a collection of spiritual poetry translated by Daniel Ladinsky titled *Love Poems from God*. The use of combined liturgical and poetic texts started to emerge in the 20th century with two famous examples being Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* and Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Dona Nobis Pacem*. In her artistic statement about *amass*, Hagen writes the following:

The translations of spiritual poetry by Daniel Ladinsky from his book 'Love Poems from God' sparked my curiosity in interreligious harmony. Here in this one book, juxtaposed next to each other, were the words of mystics and saints from various world religions, speaking of God and their faith in similar ways, with similar gestures of congeniality towards each other. The traditional texts from the Roman Catholic mass provide the framework for *amass*, but Ladinsky's translations are really the heart of the piece. I encourage you to read these poems before listening, if you are able. They are the true inspiration for the work.³⁵

The mass movements include a Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus, Benedictus, and Agnus Dei. There is no Credo set as part of this work as a result of Hagen's personal questions about her own faith.³⁶

The spiritual poems that Hagen included in *amass* are by St. John of the Cross, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Teresa of Avila, Mira, Tukaram, St. Francis of Assisi, Meister Eckhart, Rabia, and Rumi. The poems are used to enhance the liturgical texts around them and to draw the listener into a world of interreligious harmony, the central theme of the work.

³⁵ Jocelyn Hagen, *amass* (Minneapolis: manuscript), 1.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

The score was commissioned by Matthew Culloton for The Singers – Minnesota Choral Artists. They premiered it on February 12, 2011. It calls for SATB chorus; STB soloists; five celli, with one featured prominently as a soloist and the other four playing as a quartet; a guitar; and a percussion trio assigned to play a wide variety of traditional and non-traditional instruments. An example of the latter was seen and heard at the premiere when the bells that were used were handmade oxygen tank bells. At one point in the score they were struck and then lowered into a tub of water to produce a specific sound. The work was composed over several years and represents a major accomplishment in the catalogue and life of Hagen as a young composer. When asked about the compositional experience of *amass*, she stated the following:

Composing *amass* and knowing that it was going to be performed was one of the scariest things I've ever done in my entire life. It was so huge in scope and such a personal statement about faith, something that many people choose to keep private. To put all of that out there together in one package was horrifying, and with that unorthodox ensemble of which I wasn't quite sure how it would function... I'm still tweaking certain movements for the next performances. I felt different after it was premiered. It felt like I was really an artist at that point, that I had risked enough to be worthy of that title. There are lots of people who write music, but I am striving to be an artist, and to have something to say with my music, and to have my music push forward and try new things. I want those elements to define what I am writing; I don't want to just write what is comfortable. The amount of thought and energy that went into *amass* was years and years of contemplation and experimentation. But I believe it worked. It exceeded my expectations.³⁷

³⁷ Jocelyn Hagen, interview with the author, October 22, 2012.

The choral writing in *amass* includes a liberal use of homophonic textures, striking dissonances alongside unisons and diatonic writing, moments of choral *portamento*, double choir textures, textless mood-painting that supports the solo voice(s), occasional use of extreme tessituras, wide melodic and harmonic leaps for the singers to execute, and some use of antiphonal writing both between the men and women of a single choir texture as well as between the two choirs in a double choir texture. The work is extremely challenging for choristers, soloists, and instrumentalists alike, but nonetheless has been hailed as a very rewarding undertaking. Conductor Matthew Culloton said the following about the premiere performance:

I had multiple people, not related or standing by each other in line after the concert, say to me ‘I don’t know yet how this is true, but I’m a better person for having heard that music and having been here tonight.’ We had three or four people say that that night after the concert, which was a comment I had never heard about a singular work before.³⁸

Representative Composer of the Third Generation: Timothy Takach

Timothy Takach was born on October 4, 1978 in Lake Zurich, Illinois where he lived until his family moved to Eden Prairie, Minnesota during his high school years. Takach’s musical training began with Suzuki piano lessons around the age of five. His first influential experience as a singer occurred at his church. Church choir and piano lessons would be his main musical outlets through most of elementary school. Takach remembers a new experience later in his elementary years that was formative for him.

My mom was a teacher in a neighboring school district and brought me out of my class over to her school because there was a local children’s choir performing there. I saw the Barrington Children’s Choir perform and after that short in-school performance I knew it was something I wanted to do and be a part of, so I started singing with the Barrington Children’s

³⁸ Matthew Culloton, interview with the author, October 2, 2012.

Choir in 5th grade. It was an auditioned group of 60, and even so the gender wasn't balanced there but we were doing Faure and *Ceremony of Carols*, music and that I was really enjoying. Rehearsals were two afternoons a week and its funny because that organization ended up conflicting with just about every extra-curricular activity I wanted to do in school. So we had to really fine-tune the schedule for rehearsals and soccer practices. All through my life I've run into conflicts with scheduling and music has always come out on top for me.³⁹

Before his junior year in high school, Takach's father was transferred to the Golden Valley, Minnesota branch of the Honeywell Corporation. After much research into school districts that could provide a high-quality academic and artistic experience for both his son and daughter, the family decided to live in Eden Prairie. After the family moved, Takach stopped studying piano and started taking advantage of a number of singing opportunities at Eden Prairie High School. He recalls:

Julie Kanthak was my director when I got to Eden Prairie High School. That's really where I found my stride in singing as a changed voice. I was able to sing in the Concert Choir during the day and I was a part of their show choir, which met before school and at night. I got to be part of a Barbershop quartet and I also sang in a small men's ensemble that met during the lunch periods. I was able to do some arranging for these groups, and then became a section leader for the choir, so I really took advantage of the opportunities that were available.⁴⁰

Takach was slow to begin composing and arranging in earnest. Once in high school, he started preparing arrangements of existing choral scores and popular music from the radio. It was in these exercises that he started to consider proper voice-leading and vocal ranges. Of these early works, Takach says, "I don't think there was anything too artful about those early

³⁹ Timothy Takach, interview with the author, October 22, 2012.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

arrangements. It was more about function and necessity and the mechanics of getting ideas down onto paper.”⁴¹ Later in high school, Takach took a music theory and composition class that led him toward original composition for the first time.

Takach’s decision to attend St. Olaf College was sparked several years earlier while still living in Lake Zurich, Illinois. When Takach was a freshman or sophomore in high school, he and his parents watched the St. Olaf Christmas Festival on public television. He was instantly impressed by viewing the Viking Chorus, the college’s first-year men’s choir. Takach recalls:

I had been a part of ACDA Honor Choirs and things like that. In Illinois I was part of a boys honor choir directed by Henry Leck and I wish I had known back then that he was a hotshot and a big deal. Now I know! I distinctly remember that choir, but seeing a choir of young men floored me because I hadn’t seen that before and I remember thinking ‘I need to be wherever that is. I need to be a part of that.’ And I don’t think I had felt that strongly about something up until that point.⁴²

Takach decided to attend St. Olaf College and to study composition with the composing of film scores as his career aspiration. This was because of a fascination with movie soundtracks that began during high school. He perused the movie listings in the newspaper to see which composer had written the soundtrack for each film and made his viewing decisions based upon that information. Despite his enthusiasm, Takach eventually came to some different vocational conclusions.

Near the end of my freshman year, I was talking to my mom when she asked me what I was going to do with my music major. I replied that I was going to write film scores. It was during that conversation that it dawned on me that graduating from school and going out to

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

write movie music could be very hard. You don't just apply for a job and get it right away. I realized it wasn't the most practical plan so I added an art major. This may seem just as impractical, but I had had some experience in high school taking some graphic design and computer-aided graphics classes so that was sort of my plan. It seemed like a very practical supplement to the music so I ended up double majoring in music and art.⁴³

Little did Takach know that his primary career choice would be made the very day he moved into his freshman dorm room and successfully auditioned for Cantus, a new men's ensemble on campus. Cantus decided to become a full-time performing group after graduation and since has become one of the most successful male ensembles in the United States. Takach is now embarking on his seventeenth season with Cantus, a group for which he has become a principal composer and arranger. He has continued composing, arranging, learning, and crafting through this experience. He states:

I think that having a slate to work on, especially in Cantus, where you can try things out and get honest feedback has been really valuable. It's in Cantus' culture to give feedback without feeling like we're stepping on any toes. For people to say 'this is too long' or 'this transition doesn't work very well' or 'that's in my *passaggio* for four minutes and I'm tired' is very informative. For example, as a bass I didn't know what the *passaggio* was for a tenor. After hearing people talk about it I finally now understand what that means and I've learned how to write more successfully with that knowledge.⁴⁴

His compositional studies at St. Olaf were with Timothy Mahr and Peter Hamlin. Takach was especially encouraged by Mahr's ideas about becoming a more complete composer versus composing only choral music, thus one of his early works was for cello quartet and guitar.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Takach is also quick to credit a younger compositional student at St. Olaf for providing feedback and encouragement with his compositional process: Jocelyn Hagen. The two were married in December of 2006, and are now parents of two young boys.

Like Hagen, Takach has taken composition lessons with Mary Ellen Childs. He credits her for opening his eyes to new ideas and techniques. He states:

She's got a great ear for things that aren't first on my list. She does a lot of great rhythmic and percussive work, and her strong suit is instrumental music so she comes at it a lot from that angle. I'll take pieces into her that I want a second opinion on and she'll rake me over the coals on a couple of things.⁴⁵

Takach has found inspiration from earlier Minnesota-based composers, especially with their keen understanding of the business side of being a full-time composer. His respect for the musical styles of Argento, Paulus, and Larsen is high, but some of his most valuable gleanings have been in the realm of organizing his life to be a successful composer in a competitive market. He says:

Think about what Argento has done on the national and international scale, and you think about Libby and the Pulitzer, you think about Stephen and all the work that he's done and the fact that his business card is "Pilgrims' Hymn" but that is just the tip of the iceberg of what he has done. Also, the business sense and influence that these people have had between the Composers Forum and being on the board for ASCAP and being self-publishers and getting into the business of composing – that's part of it, too. It's not just what notes are on the page, but it's all the things swirling behind the music that's being written. And it's exciting to be a

⁴⁵ Ibid.

part of that scene as well and to know that you've got businesses that are already thinking about the compositional art and know about it and are supporting it.⁴⁶

Takach has received commissions from a variety of choral organizations including The Singers, the St. Olaf Choir, Choral Arts Ensemble of Rochester (MN), the Cherry Creek High School Meistersingers, the New Mexico Gay Men's Chorus, and the Bowling Green State University Men's Chorus. He won the Choral Arts Ensemble of Rochester (MN) international composition contest in 2009, which led to the commission of his score titled "A Worshipper and a Man." He was also a finalist in the Young New Yorker's Competition for Young Composers. "The Darkling Thrush" has been selected for All-State Choir performances in Texas and Florida, and his arrangement of "What Child is This" was included on the Boston Pops 2007 holiday concert tour.⁴⁷

Takach's compositional output includes more than 70 works. They include more than 40 original compositions for men, women, and mixed choirs, as well as 20 arrangements for mixed and men's choirs. His skill at writing for male ensembles is undoubtedly a result of his years as a member of Cantus. His instrumental compositions number almost a dozen works including compositions for solo cello as well as woodwind quintet and horn ensembles.

Timothy Takach: Compositional Process and Musical Traits

The beginning of the compositional process for Takach is the selection of the text. Takach says the following about what he looks for while reading and perusing poetry for possible texts:

There are many poems that have beautiful words and phrases, but if I can't figure out what the poem means after spending a couple of minutes with it there is no way I can convey that

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Timothy Takach, "Biography," Timothy Takach, <http://www.timothyctakach.com> (accessed September 15, 2012).

in music. I think it's easy to hear words in your head, and there are certain phrases that feel like they could be sung. It may be the combination of vowels and consonants and those things strike me right away. There's also a difference between very poetic poems and very prosaic poems. Some poems are very pedestrian and have a very common vernacular to them. I think they have their place, but to me the ones that I want to set have a bit more song to them.⁴⁸

One noteworthy aspect of Takach's work is his selection of unique and interesting texts. There are no traditional texts such as psalms or mass Ordinary movements in his entire catalogue of original compositions. Instead, he seeks unique texts and little-known poems by both popular and obscure poets. He also sets texts that at first don't seem to be an ideal partner to music, such as the mathematical Fibonacci sequence in "As the Sunflower Turns on Her God." Such texts present interesting and sometimes challenging programmatic possibilities for conductors, of which Takach says:

I look for texts that feel like me and I think that, to be honest, sometimes it's hard to program some of my pieces because they might stick out. What kind of program has a spot for a piece based on the Fibonacci sequence and what program are you singing that needs a piece that describes the eruption of Mount Vesuvius ("Nubes Oriebatur: the eruption of Vesuvius")?

Where do these pieces fit? Not in programs about war and peace or love.⁴⁹

Common threads that emerge throughout many of his text selections are the natural world and science. These can be seen and heard in many pieces such as the lightning crashes and thunder in "A Worshipper and a Man," the eruption of a volcano in "Nubes Oriebatur: the

⁴⁸ Timothy Takach, interview with the author, November 20, 2012.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

eruption of Vesuvius,” and the singing bird portrayed against the ‘weakening eye of day’ in “The Darkling Thrush.” Takach explains:

I think that a lot of my text choices come from my love of the natural world, the way science plays into a lot of things, and you see elements of that in a lot of my pieces like “As the Sunflower Turns on Her God” where it’s all mathematics translated into music. You see it in “Something There is Immortal” with all the stars and the constellations and having those elements present. I’m really drawn to those texts and perhaps it’s because I can’t really explain them. I’m also drawn to the wonder and the escape you can have with certain texts, and I want to share that with the singers and listeners.⁵⁰

With such interesting texts, Takach, like Hagen, works harder to portray an overall mood than to paint specific words with musical imagery. “As far as word-painting goes, I think that broader strokes jump out at me first. Textures and gestures are things that I think of right away versus specific words or very specific melodies. It’s sort of the overall picture of what the piece should sound like and that comes from the essence of the poem.”⁵¹

The forms that Takach crafts for his pieces are linked directly to the text. Several of his pieces feature poems that are clearly in two parts and thus the music is as well. This duality can be seen clearly in “A Worshipper and a Man.” The first part of the Stephen Crane text describes one who thinks the voice of God is heard in thunder and lightning. In the second half the man is corrected and told that the voice of God “whispers in the heart so softly.” Takach’s musical setting for the first half is faster and louder, and the tessitura is often higher in the ranges for the tenors, altos, and sopranos. In the second half, the music becomes softer, lower in the tessituras, and more transparent in texture.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

After the text has been selected and the major compositional details outlined, Takach works at the piano to craft the musical content. Whereas many composers now compose at the computer, Takach prefers the paper and pencil approach at the piano. He moves to the computer once major sections of the work have been completed. Once the score is notated on the computer, Takach will work to edit and cleanup the score. “Everything is written down and after I’m done I’ll go to the computer and enter it in and listen, and that’s where I do all my editing. A lot of things will change in the editing process, sometimes the harmony or texture will change. I never really create at the computer unless I’m just pushing notes around in the editing process.”⁵²

Takach’s choral output includes more a cappella music than accompanied. This is likely a result of his background as a member of the St. Olaf Choir and his long-held position in Cantus, which include so much unaccompanied music. “I like contributing to the a cappella world because it’s been such a big part of me and I think it’s an important thing to learn how to do for choirs,” he states.⁵³ However, he is clearly adept at composing choral music with piano accompaniments as well as obbligato parts for solo instruments. Recent efforts include a work composed for the Minnesota Men’s All-State Choir with piano and clarinet, titled “Goodbye, Then,” as well as a work for the Youth Chorale of Central Minnesota, “One Boy Told Me,” for choir and piano. “All Sisters and Brothers” was composed for a church choir in the Twin Cities area and includes parts for organ and two trumpets. Takach says the following about his emerging catalogue of accompanied choral music:

I played piano for years and years while growing up, so I know how it feels to play and the little things like how you can cross your fingers, and how the hands can cross, and what feels powerful to play and what doesn’t, so a lot of those things are in me and I know it. I’m also

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

consciously selecting projects that allow me to include parts for instruments. I'm also starting to write more purely instrumental music as well.⁵⁴

Takach's experiences as a singer for most of his life have made him very aware of the harmonic and melodic capabilities and limitations a choir possesses. He states:

I'm extremely conscious of the individual singer singing these lines. The singer is never a slave to the harmony. If there's a harmonic change that necessitates a tritone relationship in the voice I'm going to write that so that they don't have to jump the tritone. They can work their way around to get there. I know what it's like to be in rehearsal and to struggle for a moment because the music doesn't fit in your brain. So I think my sympathy for singers colors a lot of my harmonic work and what I'm willing to do and what I'm not.⁵⁵

His harmonic palate is primarily diatonic, though he will alter pitches to enhance the text. "Maybe for a specific line you want a flat seventh, and that color is used for that second and it's gone," he says.⁵⁶ His use of dissonance is occasional at most and he is deliberate when he uses it at all. "I definitely like dissonances. If you boil them down you get the sense that a dissonance is there providing tension to be released," he says.⁵⁷

An example of his use of dissonance to provide tension and release can be seen in the women's voices in an excerpt from "A Worshipper and a Man."

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Example 3.16 Timothy Takach, “A Worshipper and a Man,” mm. 63-67

The musical score is for four voices: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). It is in a key with two flats (B-flat major or D minor) and a common time signature. The lyrics are: "sigh - ing, sigh - - - ing, like breath sigh - - -". The Soprano part has lyrics: "sigh-ing, sigh - - - ing, dis - tant, sigh-ing,". The Alto part has lyrics: "sigh - ing, sigh - - - ing, dis - tant, sigh - ing,". The Tenor part has lyrics: "sigh - ing, dis - tant, like faint - est breath, dis - tant, sigh - ing,". The Bass part has lyrics: "sigh - ing, dis - tant, like faint - est breath, dis - tant, sigh - ing,". Dynamic markings include *mf* and *mp*. There are slurs and accents over the notes.

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Takach also likes the vagueness that open harmonies provide in his music, and examples of open fifths spring up a fair amount in his choral writing. His affinity for this sound and the harmonic implication it provides can be seen by the fact that he uses open-fifth final cadences in the two examples below, despite the fact that the pieces were previously anchored in major and/or minor tonal centers.

Example 3.17 Takach, “Something There is Immortal,” mm. 103-106

103 *mp* *p* *pp*

S Some - thing im - mor - tal.

A *mp* *p* *pp*

A Some - thing im - mor - tal.

T *mp* *p* *pp*

T Some - thing im - mor - tal.

B *mp* *p* *pp*

B Some - thing im - mor - tal.

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Example 3.18 Takach, “The Darkling Thrush,” mm. 70-73

70 *molto ritard.* *mp* *mf* *p*

S I was un - a - ware.

A *p* *mp* *p*

A I was un - a - ware.

T *p* *mp* *p*

T I was un - a - ware.

B *p* *mp* *p*

B I was un - a - ware. *pp* (♩) (a few voices)

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Another interesting harmonic trait in Takach’s music is the occasional cadence away from the key that has functioned as the tonal center. In both examples below, Takach concludes the work on the chord that represents the subdominant key.

Example 3.19 Takach, “Neither Angels, Nor Demons, Nor Powers,” mm. 61-67

61 *rit.* *p* *With Resolve* ♩ = 70 *p* *molto rit.* *mp*

S — from God. — And God shall wipe a-way all tears — from their eyes.

S — from the love of God. — And God shall wipe a-way all tears from their eyes.

A — from the love of God. — And God shall wipe a-way all tears from their eyes.

T — from (mm...) — And — God shall wipe all tears from their eyes.

B — (mm...) — And God shall wipe all tears from their eyes.

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Example 3.20 Takach, “A Sign of Day to Come,” mm. 74-78

74 *mf* *p*

S light: the Dawn of Re - deem - ing Grace.

A light: the Dawn of Re - deem - ing Grace.

T light: the Dawn of Re - deem - ing Grace.

B light: the Dawn of Re - deem - ing Grace.

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When considering melodic elements in the compositional process, Takach is acutely aware of the capabilities of the human voice. His melodies tend to feature stepwise motion that is

occasionally enhanced with skips, but rarely any intervals wider than a fourth. Takach says the following about writing melodies:

I do like stepwise melodies, but I like melodies that mean something and melodies that have an antecedent and a consequence. They don't just exist out there on their own, but they're a part of something bigger. I love writing singable melodies because that's what singers like to sing. They like things that fit in their voice well, even if they're tough. If there are some leaps in there that take awhile to get, so be it. Once you do get them they feel right and good.⁵⁸

Takach's music, like that of Paulus and Argento, is often syllabic resulting in a very clear presentation of the text. He will, however, occasionally set a melody in one part with the others sustaining underneath it in a supporting way as he does in the example below.

Example 3.21 Takach, "A Worshipper and a Man," mm. 37-41

The musical score for Example 3.21 features four vocal parts: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The music is in a key with four sharps (F#, C#, G#, D#) and a common time signature. The Soprano part begins at measure 37 with the lyrics "The voice of God, whis-pers in the heart" and continues with "the heart so soft-ly so". The Alto, Tenor, and Bass parts enter at measure 38 with the lyrics "the heart so soft-ly so". Dynamics include *p* (piano) and *pp* (pianissimo). The score includes a fermata over the Soprano part in measure 41.

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The rhythmic elements in Takach's scores are usually driven by his desire to communicate the text through its natural flow of its spoken rhythm. Like Hagen, he is drawn to triple meter or the triple subdivisions in compound meter. "There are always exceptions to this,

⁵⁸ Ibid.

but I know that as I speak these texts to myself I'm really drawn toward triple meter. I think speech has a natural lilt in those meters. Also, I like using triple meters with duples going back and forth. I think that's really effective and enhances the natural way we speak certain groups of syllables or words," he says.⁵⁹ An example of this technique is seen below in an excerpt from "The Darkling Thrush." The time signature is 6/8, but Takach sets some duple eighth notes to more accurately portray the rhythm of the spoken words.

Example 3.22 Takach, "The Darkling Thrush," mm. 45-53

45

blast - be - ruf - fled plume, had chos - en thus to fling his

blast - be - ruf - fled plume, had chos - en thus to fling his

blast - be - ruf - fled plume, had chos - en thus to fling his

blast - be - ruf - fled plume, had chos - en thus to fling his

50

soul up-on the grow - ing gloom, up - on the grow - ing

soul up-on the grow - ing gloom, up - on the grow - ing

soul up-on the grow - ing gloom, up - on the grow - ing

soul up-on the grow - ing gloom.

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⁵⁹ Ibid.

Another interesting trait in the choral music of Takach is his setting of multiple languages at the same time. One of the texts (usually English) is the primary text, while the other (in Latin) is used to help paint the mood of the piece. Three examples of this technique are worthy of mention. In “A Worshipper and a Man,” Takach had the first lines of the poem translated into Latin and used as an ostinato in the basses. These lines of text include words about the leaden thunder and vivid lightning flashes. The musical effect they portray is one of rumbling thunder in the background.

Example 3.23 Takach, “A Worshipper and a Man,” mm. 10-13

10

S *f* The liv-id light-nings flashed *mf* Ah! *f*

A *f* The liv-id light-nings flashed *mf* Ah! *f*

T *mf* "Heark-en!" "Heark - en!" "Heark - en!" "Heark - en!" "Heark-en!" "Heark -

B *mf* Ful-mi-na li-vi-da ful-ge-ban-ter nu-bes. To-ni-tru-a plum-be-a da-bant fra-go-res. Ful-mi-na li-vi-da ful-ge-

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In “And Her Smoke Rose Up Forever,” for men’s choir, Takach enhanced a Whitman poem from the battlefields with a Latin text from the Book of Revelation. In the example below, the Latin text (translated to “And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying”) is meant to comfort while Whitman’s text describes the scenes of war.

Example 3.24 Takach, “And Her Smoke Rose Up Forever,” mm. 16-24

16 *mf*
T Ash - es of sol - diers South — or North, As I
mf
B Ash - es of sol - diers South or North, As I
p
B mors ul - tra non e - rit, ne - que luc -

20
T muse re - tro - spec - tive mur - m'ring a chant in thought,
B muse re - tro - spec - tive mur - m'ring a chant in thought,
B tus, ne - que cla - mor, ne - que do - lor

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In another score for men’s choir, “Luceat Eis,” Takach sets a Latin text from the traditional Requiem mass. At one point he enhances it with a line from the Gospel of John sung in English by the second tenors. To bring more attention to this bit of text, Takach calls for it to be sung at a *forte* dynamic and keeps the line on the same pitch for its entire presentation.

Example 3.25 Takach, “Lucaet Eis,” mm. 33-43

33 *mf*
T 1 - mi - ne. In Par - a - di - sum de - du - cant te an - ge - li: et
mf *f*
T 2 - mi - ne. In Par - a - di - sum No man hath great - er love than this,
mp
B Lux ae - ter - na lu - ce - at e - is, Do - mi - ne.
B ae - ter - na lu - ce - at e - is, Do - mi - ne.

39
T 1 per - du - cant te in ci - vi - ta - tem sanc - tam Je -
T 2 to lay down his life for his friends. Je -
mf *f*
B Lux ae - ter - na lu - ce - at e - is, Do - mi -
mf *f*
B Lux ae - ter - na lu - ce - at e - is, Do - mi -

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The examination of the musical processes and traits of Jocelyn Hagen and Timothy Takach show similarities to earlier composers of this lineage, especially with regard to the care they take in setting the text in a way that enhances its original mood or intent. They also display expert craftsmanship in the variety of compositional techniques that they use. Perhaps most importantly, the composers of the third generation are writing choral music with the knowledge of how the voices in the choir will be best utilized. The music that results often allows for high levels of success because of the care they have taken to create accessible music. They have all

composed challenging music, but they've done so in a way that ensures a high probability of expressive performances. The music of Betinis, Hagen, and Takach is worthy of consideration because of its originality, degree of compositional craft, and musical sincerity.

Independent Music Publishers Cooperative

The same spirit of collegiality that is present in the second generation of composers, specifically with regard to the creation of the Minnesota Composers Forum, exists within the third generation of composers as well. That spirit is best exemplified in the founding of the Independent Music Publishers Cooperative.

The Cooperative was founded in 2011 when a collection of self-publishing Minnesota-based composers decided to combine their efforts and increase their visibility throughout the country. This was most easily accomplished by creating a central organization and website through which one could locate all the members, see their scores, and listen to performances. Co-founder Hagen states the following:

The co-op was founded because we really all know each other and what's great about Minnesota is that it's a very supportive community. It doesn't feel like a competitive community. When one of us gets an opportunity we go to hear it and support each other in our accomplishments, and I think that's kind of a rarity. So we kept seeing each other at the same conventions selling our wares and trying to make all these connections and we saw how much money we were all spending individually to do that. That's where this idea really came from. We needed to figure out how to combine our resources to make this more fiscally reasonable and also to share the wealth in a good way. If there are conductors that really like my music and they go to a website to search my pieces, this other piece by Elizabeth Alexander might show up and then they'd be thrilled, too. I feel like conductors are all going

to commission who they want to commission, who they feel drawn to, and I don't feel like us putting up all our materials collectively is going to diminish any of our individual opportunities. I think we all feel that way, too. Doing this and joining hands and being able to present our work in more places, get on more reading sessions, and attend more conferences will probably mean only good things for all of us.⁶⁰

Co-founder Takach elaborates further:

I remember that Jocelyn was talking to a composer in New York and saying something about a gig or going to see somebody else's work. This composer was aghast because he said in New York that doesn't happen. You've got all these composers that are breaking their backs just to get people to their gig and they would die before they went to support somebody else's. I think it's competitive in Minnesota because there are so many of us doing this and trying to make it work, but we all support each other the best we can. I think that Minnesota is the ideal place for something like the co-op to exist.⁶¹

The organization's first official event was at the 2011 national conference for the American Choral Directors Association held in Chicago. Their display booth was abuzz with the energy of this collection of composers such as Hagen, Takach, Betinis, J. David Moore, Edie Hill, Elizabeth Alexander, Linda Tutas Haugen, and the only out-of-state member, Joan Szymko. Much of the excitement came from the fact that the composers spent as much time introducing conductors to their colleagues as they did to their own music. An introductory letter on their website states, "We believe in each others' work and hope you will too!"

⁶⁰ Jocelyn Hagen, interview with the author, October 22, 2012.

⁶¹ Timothy Takach, interview with the author, October 22, 2012.

The vision shared by the Cooperative composers mirrors that of Paulus and Larsen, especially with regard to their work with the Minnesota Composers Forum. It provides another important link between the second and third generations of this lineage.

CHAPTER 4. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THIS LINEAGE OF COMPOSERS, CONDUCTORS, AND CHOIRS IN MINNESOTA

All three generations of choral composers included in this study have benefitted greatly from relationships forged with choral organizations in the Twin Cities area. Four choirs in particular have fostered the growth of the choral repertoire a great deal by the number of scores they have commissioned: the Dale Warland Singers, VocalEssence, The Singers, and the Choral Arts Ensemble of Rochester, MN. These ensembles have combined for more than 500 commissions or premieres of new scores since 1973.

Of the commissioned composers with whom Dale Warland worked, a few stand out because of the number of scores they produced for the Dale Warland Singers. Stephen Paulus and Carol Barnett both served as composers-in-residence for the group. Barnett composed more than two dozen works for the choir. Paulus composed more than thirty, including several suites in multiple movements. Dominick Argento composed several major works for the Dale Warland Singers including *Tria Carmina Paschalia*, *I Hate and I Love*, and *Walden Pond*.

The Dale Warland Singers was founded in 1972 and performed their final concert on May 30, 2004. During this remarkable span of more than three decades, the choir commissioned 270 new works including many by Minnesotan composers such as Argento, Paulus, Larsen, Betinis, Steve Heitzig, Edie Hill, and Aaron Jay Kernis.

Warland's enthusiasm for new music began while he was a student at St. Olaf College. During his junior year, Warland was elected to be the conductor of the Viking Male Chorus, a student-led ensemble of approximately 40 singers. After hearing the St. Olaf Choir sing "Brazilian Psalm" by Jean Berger, Warland wrote a letter to Berger asking if he would write a short work for the Viking Male Chorus. He explains what happened next:

To my surprise, Jean Berger, who I had never met and who had not acknowledged even receiving my special request, composed and sent a marvelous work, perfect for my chorus. It never occurred to me that one should offer a fee for such a request. Mr. Berger never asked for a fee and I naively went on my merry way, totally oblivious of my ignorance and the traditional expectation of a commission fee. This was my very first commission, one that led to many more, even though it was a commission with no fee!⁶²

Warland was a professor of music and choral conductor at Macalester College in St. Paul from 1967 until 1985, where he sought new compositions for his choirs to perform from the student body on campus. “The primary motivation came from a strong interest in seeking what the imaginations of young student minds might create if only they were asked to try their hand at composition. The results were truly inspiring,” states Warland.⁶³ Several of the students that responded to these invitations have enjoyed successful careers as composers including Paulus, Cary John Franklin, and Lee Kesselman.

When the Dale Warland Singers was founded, Warland continued exploring his commitment to new music, though the choir regularly performed masterpieces of Bach, Brahms, and other earlier composers. As the years went on, the focus shifted to new music. The tagline ‘Music of Our Time’ was added to many of the promotional materials and logo. “I felt an obligation to expand the repertoire of the choral field by encouraging promising composers from all over the U.S, especially those creative minds who had written only instrumental music,” says Warland.⁶⁴ Those efforts combined to create one of the greatest commissioning and performing legacies that any organization or individual can claim. For those reasons, and many more, Warland was inducted into the American Classical Music Hall of Fame in 2012.

⁶² Dale Warland, interview with the author, October 26, 2012.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Warland points to the activities and teachings of Argento and Paul Fetler at the University of Minnesota as being some of the greatest influences for fostering an appreciation for new choral music, especially from within the state of Minnesota. He says, “Unlike many teachers of composition who pressure their students to compose for opera and the symphony orchestra, these composers-teachers of composition brought stature and a level of importance to the writing for choirs that had not existed in most academic circles previously.”⁶⁵ Furthermore, classical music audiences were experiencing a shift in their artistic tastes much to the benefit of young composers. “At the beginning of the 1960’s only a few choral organizations and conductors were commissioning. However, by the end of the 1980’s everyone was commissioning. It became the thing to do. A fear of ‘the new,’ and some public disdain for 12-tone works, had subsided and there developed an excitement for ‘music of our time;’ an excitement that was timid, at the most, in the 1950’s and 60’s,” Warland asserts.⁶⁶

In 1976, the Dale Warland Singers, commissioned Charles Braden’s *Three Astronomer Poems* for an April premiere and Argento’s *Tria Carmina Paschalia* for an October program. Both concerts celebrated choral music from Minnesota, and the October concert also featured premieres of John J. Becker’s “Motet” as well as several arrangements by Stephen Paulus and Jeffrey Van. In the years to follow, Warland’s ensemble continued commissioning scores from many other Minnesota-based composers.

For Warland, two commissions out of the hundreds he oversaw throughout his career stand out as personal favorites: *I Hate and I Love (Odi et Amo)* and *Walden Pond*, both by Argento. The works are from 1981 and 1996 respectively, and were written for major anniversaries for the Dale Warland Singers. Of these two works, Warland states, “The rewards

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

stem directly from the special gifts and skills of the composer: his interesting concepts for each work, his skill as a craftsman, his unique choice of texts as well as the unusual and effective instrumentation for each work.”⁶⁷

VocalEssence was founded in 1969 as the Plymouth Music Series. Philip Brunelle has led them from the beginning. In 2002, the organization changed its name to its current moniker for “capturing the essence of its mission to explore music for the human voice, from the spoken word to choral singing.”⁶⁸ The organization scored a major artistic coup in their first year when Brunelle invited Aaron Copland to conduct a program of his choral music. The composer responded positively stating that nobody had ever invited him to do such a thing ever before!⁶⁹

In 1973, VocalEssence, performed Argento’s oratorio *Jonah and the Whale*. Brunelle sees this work as pivotal for VocalEssence and Argento. “Our very first commission was Argento’s *Jonah and the Whale*, which got us going but it also got Dominick going in the choral world. He hadn’t done the choral bit like that, though he had done operas. Some choral works composed after that, Argento said, exist because he did *Jonah and the Whale*.”⁷⁰

In the years since, a Minnesota connection with VocalEssence has been unmistakable. They have commissioned new scores from other Minnesota-based composers such as Cary John Franklin, Paulus, Larsen, Janika Vandervelde and Daniel Kallman. When talking about the reasons this relationship between Twin Cities based composers, conductors, and choirs has thrived for so long, Brunelle states:

One, because we have the American Composers Forum, so here’s this organization started right here as the Minnesota Composers Forum. I also think there are just places in the

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ VocalEssence, “About Us,” VocalEssence, <http://www.vocalescence.org> (accessed August 26, 2012).

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Philip Brunelle, interview with the author, September 26, 2012.

country that are hotbeds of composers. There are composers in every state, but there are certainly not hotbeds in every state. We have a combination of all these colleges that have strong choral programs so that gets composers around. Then it's also just the fact that we have all these choirs! We have an ethnic influx from 100 years ago that brought in all these people that wanted to sing from Scandinavia, Germany, England. Consequently, you have all these choirs and the composers as well, so they have a vehicle for their music.⁷¹

Of all the composers who have written for VocalEssence, several have forged especially meaningful relationships with the organization. Paulus stands out again as a result of the seven choral works he's written for them. He also re-arranged his famous "Pilgrims' Hymn" for choir and marimbas. Randall Davidson has composed seven works for the organization, including *The Young Lutheran's Guide to the Orchestra*. Cary John Franklin, a music faculty member at Macalester College, has composed eight scores for VocalEssence including a number of consortium commissions. Argento has composed several works for VocalEssence as well, including "A Thanksgiving to God for His House" and "The Choirmaster's Burial" from 1979 and 2009 respectively.

For Brunelle, commissioning and premiering new music has become one of his personal and organizational missions. He has a selfless view of the process and feels it is an important one for VocalEssence and choirs everywhere. He explains:

My hope when we commission a piece is that we are giving the first performance, but not the last. I want this to go on. People often ask if they could do a piece we commissioned and I say, 'Of course!' It's never a case of 'it's my piece and you can't have it, of course you can do this piece! I want you to do this piece.' Why is it important to do? I think it's important for three reasons. First of all, I feel that as a conductor I have a responsibility to encourage

⁷¹ Ibid.

composers who are living and writing today to have a vehicle by which they can continue to do that. I think it is very important that I help to provide this and help encourage them.

Secondly, I think it's very important for the audience because I think the audience needs to understand that choral music is a living breathing substance that has a glorious past, but it has an equally glorious future that just hasn't been written yet. They need to be there to discover it. Thirdly, it's always a great shot in the arm for our choir to have a chance to learn something that no one has learned before, and in many cases be able to have the composer there to offer his or her ideas, thoughts about writing choral music, and this specific piece that they are preparing.⁷²

Both Warland and Brunelle recall their collaborations with Dominick Argento fondly. Argento feels similar sentiments towards these two conductors and their choirs as well. When speaking of his relationship with Warland and the Dale Warland Singers, Argento says, "Dale's group, to me, was like the finest group I had ever heard perform choral music. And anytime I had the opportunity to write for them I got to be better than I was. When you know that you're writing for a group that good it puts pressure on you to deliver something really special."⁷³ Argento holds Brunelle in high esteem as well, saying, "In a number of instances with Philip - we got to be such close friends - that I'd just occasionally grind out an anthem for him that wasn't even requested or certainly not commissioned. Little by little I was turning into a choral composer without knowing it, I guess."⁷⁴

Both the Dale Warland Singers and VocalEssence have produced recordings that feature the choral music of Argento. In 1998, VocalEssence released a CD of Argento's music titled *American Romantic* featuring the works *Peter Quince at the Clavier*, *A Nation of Cowslips*, and

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Dominick Argento, interview with the author, November 1, 2012.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Spirituals and Swedish Chorales. Warland's recording titled *Walden Pond* features the work of the same title, *A Toccata of Galuppi's* and *I Hate and I Love*. In 2003, the recording was nominated for a Grammy in the Best Choral Performance category.

The connection that Argento forged with the musical organizations and audiences in Minnesota is one that could easily have never happened. Following the completion of his doctoral degree, he considered going to one of the coasts to pursue a composition career in Los Angeles or New York City. However, the job he was offered at the University of Minnesota came with a guaranteed income. Argento recalls:

I graduated with a doctorate from Eastman and had a Guggenheim fellowship to study in Italy, I thought I would wait and a call would come from Juilliard, Curtis, or one of the big-time schools and the only job offer that came up was Minnesota. When I came here I said to my wife "You know, this will be cultural suicide. Why am I here in the geographical center of the United States? I want to write music." Within the next 4 or 5 years, it felt like a renaissance was going on here. The Guthrie Theater came to town, the Walker Art Museum was really hot, the orchestra was terrific, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra was getting better, the Schubert Club was here. Compared to anything like New York or Los Angeles... there's nothing like it. I think had I gone to New York I'd have been swallowed up and as unknown as any other composer.⁷⁵

In the same week he was celebrating his 85th birthday, he was presented with one more validation that his decision to come to Minnesota was the right one. In his own words:

(Laughs) Excuse me for laughing. Philip Brunelle just sent me an email an hour ago and he said in today's NY Times crossword puzzle that the clue for number 9 down is 'Composer Dominick whose last name means silver in Italian' – and I laughed and thought had I decided

⁷⁵ Ibid.

to live in New York I would never have been known to the point where my name would work in a crossword puzzle.⁷⁶

The Singers, conducted by Matthew Culloton, have commissioned a great number of scores from composers of the third generation of this lineage, especially Jocelyn Hagen, Timothy Takach, Abbie Betinis, and Joshua Shank. A composer-in-residence program has provided the opportunity to offer these commissions and premieres to their audience. Certainly both the audience and composers have benefitted from this relationship.

Culloton saw first-hand the rewards of performing new music as a singer in the baritone section of the Dale Warland Singers for the choir's last five years of existence. During those years, he served as the bass section leader, assistant conductor, and musical advisor to Warland. When he founded The Singers in 2004, a commitment to commissioning new music was immediately part of the choir's mission.

We made it one of our core values from the get-go, some of that certainly ties into the Dale Warland influence on me specifically. It was something I wanted to bring with us when we started the Singers organization. I was in a unique position to have three young composers singing in the choir whom I felt were up and coming at that time: Abbie Betinis, Josh Shank, and Jocelyn Hagen. I personally love the process of commissioning and working with a composer on a new piece of music and bringing it to fruition. This was certainly something that Dale influenced in me, and something that I think is crucial for the choral arts right now.

Culloton recognizes the relationship between regional composers and choirs as being important to his career not only as a conductor but also as a composer. He has written scores for a number of regional choirs including the Dale Warland Singers, Choral Arts Ensemble of Rochester, MN, the MMEA Minnesota All-State Men's Choir, and several high school and

⁷⁶ Ibid.

collegiate choirs. From 2000-2006, Culloton was the director of choral activities at Hopkins High School, located in the Twin Cities suburbs, where he actively commissioned new scores for his choirs and brought the composers into the classroom environment to work with his students.

The scores that he commissioned from area composers for The Singers include a large number of Christmas carols, plus other short works for a cappella choir. Several commissioned works stand out because of their duration and the impact of their subject matter. Hagen's *amass* is the greatest commissioning achievement from The Singers first decade of existence.⁷⁷ The other work that stands out to Culloton is "He Was Singing." It was composed by Joshua Shank as a memorial for Benjamin Larson, a Luther College graduate who was doing mission work in Haiti at the time of the 7.0 magnitude earthquake on January 12, 2010. Larson was one of approximately 316,000 people who died as a result of the disaster. "Josh Shank's piece, the memorial that he wrote, was a very personal piece. We had members of the choir who sang with Ben. It was a difficult text to sing. The words are from his widow and Lutheran hymnody as well. It was a gutsy move and a brave piece for Josh to write. It was a hard commission for Josh to embrace, but it's a fantastic piece," states Culloton.⁷⁸

The Singers may indeed prove to be to the third generation of composers what VocalEssence and the Dale Warland Singers were to Argento and the second generation composers. Hagen speaks frankly about the support she has received from Matthew Culloton and The Singers organization:

I have to talk about the fact that I really don't think I'd be where I am without Matthew Culloton. He took such a shot on me. 'Hey, can you write me a carol in a week?' Yes! And that was "O Come, O Come Emmanuel." It was one of those things where if you get the

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

opportunity just don't say no. Say yes, you will do it. Worry about how to squeeze it into your life later. And then he let me write for The Singers year after year and get those great recordings that I could use and then they were played on the radio all the time. I feel like a lot of people got to know me through that group.⁷⁹

Another supporter of Hagen was Kathy Romey, the director of choirs at the University of Minnesota and conductor of the Minnesota Chorale. While Hagen was earning her master's degree from the University of Minnesota, Romey lead performances of "Laus Trinitati" with the Minnesota Chorale and also commissioned Hagen to compose a piece for 'Women's Voice,' a women's chorus festival. This was one of Hagen's earliest commissions. Romey has continued to program Hagen's works with her choirs.

Another choir that has played a significant role in the Minnesota choral scene during the last three decades is Choral Arts Ensemble, located in Rochester, MN. They are based 60 miles southeast of the Twin Cities, and are one of the core arts organizations in the state's third-largest city. There have been only two artistic directors to lead the group, Rick Kvam (1985-2003, 2012-present) and Michael Culloton (2004-2012). They have overseen a commissioning program started in 1996 that has produced nearly fifty new scores. Minnesota-based composers have been given a good deal of attention from this organization, including Paulus, Hagen, Takach, Betinis, Warland, Carnahan, David Dickau, Kallman, René Clausen, and Kenneth Jennings.

The commissioning activities of Choral Arts Ensemble were for many years funded by a collection of donors who gathered to select the composers they wanted to hire to compose for the choir. This commissioning club was the impetus for other privately funded commissions. One such program created funding for a new carol to be composed every year for ten years in memory of Mary Joyce Frantz, a local supporter of the choir who had passed away. Some of the

⁷⁹ Jocelyn Hagen, interview with the author, October 2, 2012.

resulting carols have become top sellers for their publishing companies, including Clausen's "There is No Rose" and Z. Randall Stroope's "All My Heart This Night Rejoices." After the ten years had passed, a family approached the organization about starting a new ten-year program in honor of their father, Lloyd Ketterling, who was a long-time choir director in the Rochester public school system.

In 2006, the board of directors for Choral Arts Ensemble took a major step in recognizing the importance of commissioning new music to such a degree that they voted to include a permanent line item in the organizational budget for such activities, and the commissioning club as an active unit of fundraising was dissolved. One of the new activities that the organization created was a call for scores and competition that resulted in the winner receiving a commission to compose a piece for Choral Arts Ensemble to perform. The first winner of the contest was Japanese composer Kentaro Sato. The award and commission in year two went to Takach. The resulting commissioned score was "A Worshipper and a Man."

Tkach, too, speaks highly of the choral environment in Minnesota and what it has meant for him to develop as a composer in such a professional and supportive musical climate:

I think that, first of all, you've got really top-notch ensembles from the church choirs all the way up to the semi-pros and professional choirs – and that includes colleges and high school. The culture of singing at a high level is strong. The culture here is that we like to do this and we like to do it the best we can. We have singers that aren't afraid of new music, and conductors who aren't afraid of new music and, in fact, champion it. They take risks with new composers on the scene. They're willing to do that and they want to expose that music to their audience. They want to share that and the conductor is the linchpin of all this because they are the ones making these choices saying not only 'this is what you're going to sing' but

also ‘this is what you’re going to hear.’ That’s a huge responsibility for a conductor, especially in Minnesota. You’ve got audiences now who are used to hearing this high quality music on Sunday morning in church and in school Christmas concerts. They are also used to buying tickets for the Basilica and the Ordway, or wherever they are going to hear choral music. Whether it’s an a cappella choir or the Minnesota Chorale supporting a work with the orchestra playing, they are used to hearing high quality singing as well as high quality repertoire. I think we’ve got smart audiences here in Minnesota that are hungry for new music, but they also want the old classics sung really well.⁸⁰

Choral conductors, composers, and musicians throughout the country have benefitted greatly from the relationships forged during the last half-century in Minnesota. This study of the lineage of great choral composers based in the state is possible only because these relationships were so fruitful and the participants, both conductors and composers, have been so willing to take risks with new offerings for their audiences. The rewards thus far have been great. There is little reason to think that they will be any different in the future. Enthusiastic leaders are at the helm of these arts organizations, and with the number of talented Minnesota composers desiring to work together, the legacy should continue to grow.

⁸⁰ Timothy Takach, interview with the author, October 22, 2012.

CHAPTER 5. SUMMARY

This paper has examined three generations of choral composers that have found success and artistic relevance in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. A new generation, the third in this lineage, includes Jocelyn Hagen and Timothy Takach. This third generation has developed as composers and artists to the point that they can rightly be considered heirs to this choral composition legacy. Three major factors point to the connections between each generation: level of compositional craft, a strong connection to the thriving choral scene in Minnesota, and their advocacy work on behalf of other composers.

Many similarities can be seen in the compositional styles of all the composers in this survey. Beginning with Argento and following through the work of Paulus, Larsen, Carnahan, Hagen, and Takach we see first and foremost an attention to the text that guides the compositional process. This results in textures that are most often homophonic, and that rarely include imitative polyphony as that would confuse the text in the ears of the listeners. This music also tends to be syllabic and does not often feature melismatic treatment of the text. One development that has occurred as the third generation emerges as leaders in the field is their use of repeated text within a piece. Earlier composers like Argento and Paulus rarely repeat text in their settings, while Hagen is apt to do so in a way that provides a rhythmic drive in her scores.

The harmonic and melodic language of the composers from this lineage is also very similar. All have angular melodies in their catalogues, but they are known for singable melodies that are written with consideration of what singers are able to accomplish. Their harmonic palates all tend toward diatonic use of pitches with added or altered tones used to accomplish a desired effect. Argento has the most varied palate of all these composers as his catalogue includes some music that was composed with serial techniques. However, his choral output is

relatively free of that influence. Paulus, as described earlier, does have a penchant for leaving the established key and wandering through episodes of polytonality, even though his music is rooted essentially in easily identified key centers. The composers of the third generation have proven to be more conservative with regard to serial or advanced harmonic techniques, though their music is not totally devoid of them.

The overall level of craft is high among these composers and their works demonstrate solid techniques of choral composition. Each composer shows an interest in a variety of choral textures and a clear understanding of the basic tessituras for each section of the choir. Their compositions are thought out clearly and constructed in ways that choirs are able to perform them successfully with typical amounts of rehearsal time.

Another important link that is shared throughout this lineage is the strong relationship between the composers and choral conductors in the Twin Cities area. As pointed out earlier, Argento credits his emergence as a choral composer to the relationships that he enjoys with the two most influential choral conductors in the Twin Cities, Dale Warland and Philip Brunelle. Both worked with Argento during the early stages of their conducting careers with the Dale Warland Singers and VocalEssence, and the commissioning of new scores became a major part of their work as artistic leaders in the community. As their influence spread throughout the state and beyond, new music started to emerge as a regular part of concerts throughout the country.

Soon, other choirs started to value the opportunity of working with living composers, and the idea of commissioning new music started to take hold as an exciting activity for arts organizations. This resulted in work for composers like Paulus, Larsen, Barnett, and Carnahan. Younger choral organizations like The Singers and Choral Arts Ensemble of Rochester then commissioned composers of the latest generation like Hagen, Takach, and Betinis. It should be

noted that these younger choral organizations have championed the music of all three generations studied in this project, which further attests to the strength and relevance of the previous generations of Argento, Paulus, and their colleagues.

Lastly, a common link between all composers in this lineage has been their tireless advocacy for the Twin Cities arts scene, which has benefitted choral musicians as well as the artistic community in general for the last fifty years. Argento led the way in his work by helping create the Minnesota Opera, one of the country's premiere opera organizations. Paulus and Larsen, along with several of their colleagues, started the Minnesota Composers Forum as an opportunity to support each other's work. One of the popular activities of the Minnesota Composers Forum was forming a choir to sing through new scores by this group of composers so they could hear their efforts and get immediate feedback about their music. This organization has been so successful that it was expanded and renamed the American Composers Forum and continues to serve the needs of thousands of composers from around the country.

The composers of the third generation have demonstrated an equally impressive spirit of collaboration and advocacy through their work, especially in the forming of the Independent Music Publishers Cooperative. The Cooperative works to introduce conductors to a variety of composers through a shared web site (imp.coop) at which all their music can be seen and heard. The group maintains a strong presence at regional and national choral conferences, and members are active participants and panelists at workshops and clinics throughout the region and country. The choral world is benefitting from them a great deal, especially as young musicians find inspiration from their work.

For all these reasons, it is appropriate to recognize that composers of the third generation, especially Jocelyn Hagen, Timothy Takach, and Abbie Betinis, are no longer emerging

composers, but are indeed composers whose careers now belong to the same tradition to which Argento, Paulus, Larsen, and Carnahan belong. They have demonstrated high artistry in their choral compositions, established roots in the Minnesota choral scene, and possess a level of advocacy that almost certainly will allow for a fourth generation in the decades to come as heirs to their legacy.

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