

Choral Journal

November 2004

Choral Reviews

Exploring the world of choral music

Lyn Schenbeck, editor

Proud Music of the Storm

Carlyle Sharpe

SATB Soli,

SATB Chorus and Orchestra

2.2.2.2.2.0.0

**Timpani, Vibraphone, Tambourine,
Glockenspiel, Bass Drum, Tam-tam,
Triangle, Suspended Cymbal, Wind
Chimes (metal)**

Strings

ECS Publishing # 6089 \$7.60

It is refreshing to come across a new multi-movement choral/orchestral work where overall compositional unity is emphasized. Carlyle Sharpe has produced an eight-movement work that offers great emotional contrasts, while maintaining solid architectural structure.

Proud Music of the Storm was commissioned in 2001 by the Providence Singers, directed by Julian Wachner. It is based on the Walt Whitman poem of the same title. The composer selected about two thirds of the poem's substantial text for this composition, working to depict textual images.

An assortment of rhythmic devices is used throughout this work to great success. The rhythms are not excessively challenging for most choirs, and are appropriate for the proper recitation of the text. The rhythm of the fifth movement "I hear the dance-music of all nations" contains the most mixed meter. The real rhythmic genius in this composition lies in the slower movements,

where subtle disruptions caused by the placement of triplets at certain moments are sublime.

The harmonic language in this work is consonant enough to allow the listener to focus on the poem, yet romantically expressive without being unduly difficult. There is a balance between dissonance and consonance, while maintaining a sense of harmonic unity over the course of this twenty-eight minute work, making it harmonically approachable for choirs of various skill levels. The unaccompanied fourth movement "Ah from a little child" is harmonically rich in its limited but deliberate use of extended chords.

Some of the most wonderful (and difficult) musical lines are in the solos. There is a brief section for unaccompanied quartet just before the final movement. The brief quartet is delicate, and sets the stage for the ultimate climax.

The final movement's long, slow, bass pedal E seems almost too long and slow until the climactic moment on the text "Life to Death." At that point, the extended preparation for the climax makes enormous sense. Here there is some resolution to the turmoil of the "storms" portrayed in the preceding movements. Audiences may appreciate the strong mental images elicited by the sounds coupled with the text. Sharpe has created a worthy addition to the repertoire.

Greg Hobbs
Coral Gables, FL