

ABBIE BETINIS

ASSURANCE

For SSAATTBB chorus and soprano solo

Text by William Stafford

*Premiered by "The Ab Choir;" Shannon Salyards, soprano; Jayce Ogren, conductor
On Voices of Healing (Senior Composition Recital), St. Olaf College
April 11, 2001*

Assurance

You will never be alone, you hear so deep
a sound when autumn comes. Yellow
pulls across the hills and thrums,
or the silence after lightning before it says
its names – and then the clouds' wide-mouthed
apologies. You were aimed from birth:
you will never be alone. Rain
will come, a gutter filled, an Amazon,
long aisles – you never heard so deep a sound,
moss on rock, and years. You turn your head –
that's what the silence meant: *You're not alone.*
The whole wide world pours down.

-William Stafford*

Program Note:

William Stafford woke at 4:00 every morning to eat toast and write. His texts are honest, and often rooted in the imagery of nature. *Assurance*, in particular, puts human fears of loneliness and desertion into the much larger context of constants in nature: the changing seasons, the growing of moss, the patient carving of rivers, the years.

While taking a class in African Music (incidentally in Eugene, Oregon, where Stafford died), I came across the Nigerian technique of melorhythm. Melorhythm is a group of rhythmic patterns sung simultaneously. Like the Renaissance hocket, a very clear melody is passed from voice to voice so that no individual sings the entire melody. In *Assurance*, the tenors begin, “Then **the** clouds' wide-mouthed...” accenting the word “**the**.” The altos join with, “the clouds' **whole**...” The soprano phrase accents “**wide**.” The melody woven between the voices eventually forms the final phrase of the poem: “**The whole wide world pours down.**” As each singer listens and interacts with the other voice parts, the individual rhythms and melodies are woven into a grander texture of sound. From that texture emerges a single, soaring, melodic line: a line that nobody – and everybody – is singing. Just as the text confirms an underlying web of support and togetherness, the music, too, can only exist when everyone supports each other.

Assurance, completed in October of 2000 when I was 20 years old, was my first choral piece of now over forty. It premiered April 11, 2001 on “Voices of Healing,” a full-length concert of my original work exploring the five stages of grief, where this piece represented the final stage: Acceptance. The recital, for which I was granted departmental distinction from St. Olaf College, celebrated the miraculous human healing process in general, but also my own journey of coming into “new” life after having had to leave school to undergo cancer treatment two years before. The 40-voice choir that premiered it was made up of devoted friends and classmates who had helped me heal more quickly through their love and emotional support.

In May 2002, *Assurance* was a finalist for the University of Minnesota's Craig and Janet Swan Composer Prize.

- Abbie Betinis, 2007
(8½ years cancer-free!)

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Assurance

For SSAATTBB a cappella choir and soprano solo

William Stafford (1914-1993)*

Abbie Betinis (b. 1980)

Freely and Passionately ♩ = 96

Musical score for the first system of 'Assurance'. It features five vocal staves: Soprano 1 (Sop. 1), Soprano 2 (Sop. 2), Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The music is in common time (C) and begins with a dynamic marking of *pp*. The Soprano 2 and Bass parts have lyrics 'Oo' and 'niente' respectively. The Soprano 1 and Tenor parts have lyrics 'Oh' and 'Oh' respectively. The Soprano 1 part has a dynamic marking of *pp* at the end of the system.

Musical score for the second system of 'Assurance', starting at measure 5. It features the same five vocal staves. The Soprano 1 part has lyrics 'Oh', 'Eh', and 'Ah' with dynamic markings *mp* and *f*. The Soprano 2 part has lyrics 'Ah' with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The Alto part has lyrics 'Oh' and 'Oo' with dynamic markings *mp* and *mf*. The Tenor and Bass parts have lyrics 'Ah' and 'mf' respectively. The Soprano 1 part has a dynamic marking of *mp* at the beginning of the system.

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9

Solo

Sop 1
Ah Ah³ Eh Ah

Sop 2
Ah Ah³

Alto
Ah

Ten
8 You will ne - ver

Bass
You

mf

13 *mp*

Solo
Oh

Sop
ppp
a . . . lone,

Alto
ppp
a . . . lone,

Ten
8 be a - lone, *

Bass
be a - lone, *

sub. ppp

mf

* The asterisk denotes a close to the nasale.

17

Solo *mp* Oh niente

Sop niente

Alto niente

Ten *fp* niente

Bass niente

21

Solo *mp* you hear so deep a sound when au - tumn comes.

Sop *mp* when au - tumn

Alto *mp* when au - tumn

Ten *mp* when au - tumn

Bass *mp* when au - tumn

25

Solo
Yel - low pulls a-cross the hills and thrums, and thrums, when

Sop
comes. * pulls and thrums,* and thrums,*

Alto
comes. * pulls and thrums,* and and thrums,

Ten
8 Yel - low pulls and thrums,* and thrums,*

Bass
comes. * pulls and thrums,* and thrums,*

pp

29

Solo
au - - - - - turn comes.

Sop 1
Yel - - - - low

Sop 2
Yel - low pulls a-

Alto
and thrums, and thrums, when au - turn comes.

Ten
8 - when au - turn comes. pulls a-

Bass
- when au - turn comes.

mf *mp*

Solo *mp*
or the

Sop 1 *mp* *sub. pp*
pulls a - cross the hills and thrums, and thrums,* thrums,*

Sop 2 *mp* *sub. pp*
cross — the hills — the hills and thrums, and thrums,* thrums,*

Alto *f* *sub. pp*
cross hills and thrums,* and thrums,*

Ten *f* *sub. pp*
cross — the hills — the hills and thrums,* and thrums,*

Bass *f* *sub. pp*
Yel - low pulls the hills and thrums,* and thrums,*

Solo *cresc.* *rall.* *ff* *a tempo*
si - lence af - ter light - ning be - fore it says its names —

Sop 1

Sop 2

Alto *f*
you're not a -

Ten

Bass

Solo

Sop 1
and then the clouds' wide - mouthed a - po - lo - gies.

Sop 2
and then the clouds' a - po - lo - gies. a -

Alto
lone. then the clouds' wide a - po - lo - gies.

Ten
and then the clouds' a - po - lo - gies. wide

Bass
and then the clouds' wide - mouthed a - po - lo - gies. wide -

f *decresc.*

Sop 1
a - po - lo - - - - gies.

Sop 2
po - lo - gies. a - po - lo - - - - gies.

Alto
- a - po - lo - gies. a - po - lo - - - - gies.

Ten
then the clouds' wide - mouthed wide a - po - lo - gies.

Bass
mouthed

p *mp*

49

mp

poco a poco cresc.

Alto II

Ten

the clouds' — clouds' — whole wide —

then the clouds' wide - mouthed wide a - po - lo - gies. then the clouds' wide - mouthed

52

Alto II

Ten

world — pours world — pours the clouds' — clouds' — whole wide — world — pours world — pours

wide a - po - lo - gies. then the clouds' wide - mouthed wide a - po - lo - gies.

55 *mp*

poco a poco cresc.

Sop 2

Alto II

Ten

clouds' - a - po - lo - gies. The wide world — pours a - po - lo - gies. the clouds' - a - po - lo - gies. The wide

the clouds' · clouds' whole wide — world — pours world — pours the clouds' — clouds' — whole wide —

then the clouds' wide - mouthed wide a - po - lo - gies. then the clouds' wide - mouthed

58

Sop 2 world — pours a - po - lo - gies. the clouds' — a - po - lo - gies. The wide world — pours a - po - lo - gies. the

Alto I *mf* the clouds' — the clouds' — world — pours — *poco a poco cresc.*

Alto II world — pours world — pours the clouds' — clouds' — whole wide — world — pours world — pours

Ten 8 wide a - po - lo - gies. then the clouds' wide - mouthed wide a - po - lo - gies.

61

Sop 1 *mf* down. a - a - a - po - lo - gies *poco a poco cresc.*

Sop 2 clouds' — a - po - lo - gies. The wide world — pours a po - lo - gies. the clouds' — a - po - lo - gies. The wide

Alto I down. the clouds' — the clouds' - world — pours — down. the clouds' — the clouds' -

Alto II the clouds' — clouds' — whole wide — world — pours world — pours the clouds' — clouds' — whole wide —

Ten 8 then the clouds' wide - mouthed wide a - po - lo - gies. then the clouds' wide - mouthed

Sop 1
 down a - a - po - lo - gies down. a - a - a - po - lo - gies down a - a - po - lo - gies

Sop 2
 world - pours a - po - lo - gies. the clouds' - a - po - lo - gies. The wide world - pours a - po - lo - gies. the

Alto I
 world - pours down. the clouds' - the clouds' - world - pours

Alto II
 world - pours world - pours the clouds' - clouds' - whole wide - world - pours world - pours

Ten
 wide a - po - lo - gies. then the clouds' wide - mouthed wide a - po - lo - gies.

Sop 1
fp down. *fp* pours down. *ff* pours down a - a - po - lo - gies

Sop 2
ff clouds' - *fp* a - po - lo - gies down pours down The

Alto I
fp down. *fp* pours down pours down pours

Alto II
fp down. *ff* The world - pours world - pours down pours

Ten
fp down. *ff* The world - pours world - pours down pours

Bass
ff down. *fp* pours down pours down The

70 *rit. mp* *Gently* ♩ = 132 *p*

Sop 1 world The world You were aimed from birth

Sop 2 world heard so deep a sound, from birth

Alto I down. The world You were aimed

Alto II down. The world You were aimed

Ten down. The world You were aimed

Bass world pours down. You You will

76 *mf* *mp* *p*

Solo Oh

Sop 1 from birth: Oh

Sop 2 Oh

Alto

Ten Oh You hear so

Bass ne - ver be a - lone, *p*

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87

Sop
come, will come, an A - ma-

Alto
come, will come, a gut - ter filled, an A - ma-

Ten
8 come, will come, an A - ma - zon,

Bass
Rain will come, an Am - an A - ma-

91 *ff* $\text{♩} = 132$ *With a soft harshness, more consonants than vowels*
decresc.

Sop
ff *decresc.*
zon, *

Alto
ff *decresc.*
zon, *

Ten
8 *ff* *mp*
zon, come, the Rain will come, gut - ter gut - ter filled, come, the Rain will come,

Bass
ff
zon, *

* Composer's note: The section beginning at m. 92 should differ from the similar section at m.47 in that it is very soft, even semi-whispered. Each voice should enter with prominent consonants and very little tone. Only the accented notes should be given their full tone, which should create a singular, clear melody emerging from the percussive texture.

95

p

Sop

Alto I

Alto II

Ten 1

Bass

will come the come the whole wide — gut - ter pours gut - ter pours

gut - ter gut - ter filled, come, the Rain will come, gut - ter gut - ter filled,

98

mp

Sop 1

Sop 2

Alto I

Alto II

Ten 1

Bass

gut - ter, the gut - ter filled, the wide A - ma - zon a gut - ter filled the

will come the come the whole wide — gut - ter pours gut - ter pours

come, the Rain will come, gut - ter gut - ter filled,

100

Sop 2
gut - ter, the gut - ter filled, the wide A - ma - zon a gut - ter filled the

Alto I
mp
The gut - ter — the gut - ter world — pours —

Alto II
will come the come the whole wide — gut - ter pours gut - ter pours

Ten
come, the Rain will come, gut - ter gut - ter filled,

Bass
p
The whole wide world pours —

102

Sop 1
mp
down a a an A - ma - zon down a an A - ma - zon

Sop 2
gut - ter, the gut - ter filled, the wide A - ma - zon a gut - ter filled the

Alto I
down The gut - ter — the gut - ter world — pours —

Alto II
will come the come the whole wide — gut - ter pours gut - ter pours

Ten
cresc.
come, the Rain will come, gut - ter gut - ter filled,

Bass
pp
down.

104

Sop 1
down a a an A - ma - zon down a an A - ma - zon

Sop 2
cresc.
gut - ter, the gut - ter filled, the wide A - ma - zon a gut - ter filled the

Alto I
cresc.
down The gut - ter — the gut - ter world — pours —

Alto II
104 will come the come the whole wide — gut - ter pours gut - ter pours

Ten II

Bass

106 [All at full voice]

Sop 1
down a a an A - ma - zon down a an A - ma - zon

Sop 2
gut - ter, the gut - ter filled, the wide A - ma - zon a gut - ter filled the

Alto I
down The gut - ter — the gut - ter world — pours —

Alto II
will come the come the whole wide — gut - ter pours gut - ter pours

Ten
8 come, the Rain will come, gut - ter gut - ter filled,

Bass

Sop 1
down a a an A - ma - zon down a an A - ma - zon

Sop 2
gut - ter, the gut - ter filled, the wide A - ma - zon a gut - ter filled the

Alto I
down The gut - ter — the gut - ter world — pours —

Alto II
will come the come the whole wide — gut - ter pours gut - ter pours

Ten
come, the Rain will come, gut - ter gut - ter filled,

Sop 1
down a a an A - ma - zon down a an A - ma - zon down a a an A - ma - zon

Sop 2
mf
gut - ter, the gut - ter filled, the wide A - ma - zon a gut - ter filled the ne - - - - - ver

Alto
ff
down The gut - ter — the gut - ter world — pours — down The gut - ter — the gut - ter

Ten
ff
You — will —
come, the Rain will come, gut - ter gut - ter filled, ne - - - - - ver

Bass
ff
You — will — ne - - - - - ver

113 down a an A-ma-zon

Sop
be a - - - lone,

Alto
world — pours — down The gut-ter — the gut-ter world — pours — You will ne - ver be a-

Ten
- be a - - - lone,

Bass
- be a - - - lone,

Freely ♩ = 132

117 Rain will come, Rain will come,

Sop
Rain will come, Rain will

Alto
lone, You will ne - ver be a - lone,

Ten
Rain will come, Rain will

Bass

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130

Sop
aisles long aisles long aisles long

Alto
aisles long aisles long

Ten
aisles long aisles long aisles long aisles long

Bass
aisles long aisles long aisles long

135

Sop
aisles long aisles an A - ma - - -

Alto
aisles a gut - ter filled, an A - ma -

Ten
aisles a gut - ter filled, an A - ma -

Bass
aisles an Am - an A - ma - - -

139

Solo *f* Oh

Sop *f* zon, *mp* A - ma *pp* zon,

Alto *fp* zon, *pp* zon,

Ten *fp* zon, A - ma *pp* zon,

Bass *fp* zon, A - ma *pp* zon,

143

Solo *p* Oh

Sop *mp* you ne - ver heard so deep a sound, you ne - ver

Alto

Ten

Bass you ne - ver

147

Suddenly slower ♩ = 98

Solo
heard so deep a sound, you ne - ver

Sop
heard so deep a sound, *pp*
moss on rock,

Alto
pp
moss on rock,

Ten
pp
moss on rock,

Bass
heard so deep a sound, *pp*
moss on rock,

151

Solo
heard so deep a sound, heard ——— so deep a

Sop
mp *cresc.*
moss on rock, moss on rock, ———

Alto
mp *cresc.*
moss on rock, moss on rock, ———

Ten
mp *cresc.*
moss on rock, moss on rock, ———

Bass
mp *cresc.*
moss on rock, moss on rock, rock, rock,

155

With movement ♩ = 120-132

Solo

sound, _____

Sop *mf* moss on rock, _____ and years, _____ and

Alto _____ and years, _____ and

Ten _____ and years, _____

Bass _____ moss on rock, _____ and years, _____

mf

159

Sop *mf* years, _____ and years, _____ and

Alto years, _____ and years, _____ and years, _____ and _____

Ten *mf* _____ and years, _____ and years, _____ and _____

Bass *mf* _____ and years, _____ and years, _____ and _____

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172

f
Solo Oh

mf
Sop heard so deep a sound, you ne - ver heard so

mf
Alto heard so deep a sound, you ne - ver heard so

mf
Ten heard so deep a sound, you ne - ver heard so

mf
Bass heard so deep sound, you ne - ver heard so

177

mp
Solo Ah You

mp
Sop deep a sound, you ne - ver heard

mp
Alto deep a sound, you ne - ver heard

Ten deep a sound,

Bass deep sound,

182

Maestoso, half tempo

mf

Solo
turn your head you're not a - lone.

Sop
Maestoso, half tempo
[whispered] that's what the si - lence meant: you're not a - lone. The

Alto
Maestoso, half tempo
pp that's what the si - lence meant: Oh The

Ten
Maestoso, half tempo
pp that's what the si - lence meant: Oh The

Bass
Maestoso, half tempo
pp that's what the si - lence meant: Oh The

molto *f*

186

Solo

Sop
whole wide world pours down. pours down.

Alto
whole wide world pours down. pours down.

Ten
whole wide world pours down. pours down. (maybe w/ C#?)

Bass
whole wide world pours down. pours down.

ff *fff*

Also by Abbie Betinis . . .

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Yhinx: An Ancient Greek Love Charm Text: Theocritus, ancient Greek stone	TTBB a cappella, t. t. b. solos	Abylon Press AB-018-01

ABBIE BETINIS (b. 1980) has written music in a variety of genres, but her greatest passion is for the human voice. Betinis, who also sings professionally, holds a BA in music with emphasis in theory/composition from St. Olaf College, where she studied primarily with Peter Hamlin and Mary Ellen Childs, and a MA in music composition from the University of Minnesota, where she studied under Judith Zaimont. Upon twice receiving the Cynthia Lilley Scholarship from the European American Musical Alliance, she spent two summers at La Schola Cantorum and the Ecole Normale de Musique in Paris, France, where she studied harmony and counterpoint in the tradition of Nadia Boulanger with faculty from Juilliard and the Paris Conservatory. Betinis has won the Craig and Janet Swan Composer Prize in Choral Music (2005) the *Mention Excellent* and *Mention Bien* (EAMA), numerous Minnesota Music Educators Association Awards in composition, and was a finalist for the Ithaca College Choral Composition Contest (2004), and the Young New Yorkers Chorus Composition Competition (2005). Her work has been commissioned by the American Suzuki Foundation, Cantus, the Dale Warland Singers, Ensemble of the North, Hopkins High School, The Rose Ensemble, The Schubert Club, and the University of Minnesota Men's Chorus, among others. Her work is published by Abylon Press, Augsburg Fortress, Graphite Publishing, Kjos, and Santa Barbara Music Publishing. She lives in Saint Paul, where she serves as Composer-in-Residence for The Schubert Club.

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