

Szymko / At the Shore of the World / SSATB, sop solo, hand perc, piano / dur; 3'50"

At the Shore of the World

NOTES from the COMPOSER

The “seed” of this work is a chant I composed while I was a Fellow at *Instituto Sacatar*, an artist residency in Bahia, Brazil (2009). I was there in part to observe music and festivities surrounding the large annual *Festival de Iemanjá* on February 2. I also explored the mythology and music of the African sourced spirituality, *candomblé* with its pantheon of Afro Brazilian gods and goddesses, called *orixás*. *Yemanjá* (Yoruba spelling) is the *orixá* of “the waters.” All life is dependent on water and so *Yemanjá* is also considered the Mother of Life. Two short *candomblé* song texts (one in the original Yoruba language, the other translated into Portuguese) honoring *Yemanjá* are combined with a lovely poem by Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore that, in this work, serves as the voice of *Yemanjá*. And so this is a love song of sorts between the world (people) and the waters (*Yemanjá*). For some time now, I have been of the belief the human race is coming to a “threshold”—a point of no return, in regards to our relationship to our planet. My hope is that this work will be sung to bring awareness to our dependence on our Mother Earth and on her suffering.

The traditional rhythm, *Ijexá* is an integral part of “At the Shore of the World.” It is one of the *candomblé* rhythms used to accompany songs honoring *Yemanjá*. (*Ijexá* tutorials can be found on YouTube.) Conga type drums are preferred. *Lé* and *Rumpi* are drums used in *candomblé*. A high (*quinto*) and medium (*conga*) conga styled drums are the best approximation. It is important that the drummers play what’s in the score. Once the patterns start, they don’t vary. (Although there are important stops and dynamics to observe.) In selecting an agogo (2-tone Brazilian bell) take care that the pitches of the bell do not clash with tonality the piece. If an agogo bell with compatible pitches is not available, a single cowbell or wood block of indiscriminate pitch can be used (playing both high and low notes). The piece can stand on its own with just the percussion as accompaniment; although piano is definitely preferred when available. A separate percussion score is available.

PERCUSSION KEY

S = slap tone

O = open tone

M = muffled

t = touch with fingertips (ghost notes)

Regarding Ms.61-65: the “sh” of shore should be lengthened—make half the duration of the note preceding the word “shore” an “SH” sound that intensifies an opens to the vowel. (the white noise of the “SH” employed so as to sound like waves crashing on the shore).

—Joan Szymko

TEXT

A wà ààbò a yó Yemanjá (trad. candomblé song text)

Iemanjá do rio somos seus filhos (trad. candomblé song text)

My heart beats her waves
at the shore of the world
and writes upon it her
signature in tears with the
words “I love thee.” (R. Tagore)

TRANSLATION

A wà ààbò a yó Yemanjá (Yoruba)
Yemanjá, protect us and fill us with contentment

(Portuguese)
Yemanjá of the river/waters, we are your children

(About the spelling of the goddess name:
For consistency’s sake, I elected to use just the Yoruba
spelling and one pronunciation. Yoruba is the African
language of *candomblé*)

PRONUNCIATION

A wà ààbò a yó ah wàh àh boh ah yoh
- “à” is brighter as in “ask”
- no diphthong on “oh”

Yemanjá yay-mā-zhah
- ā (nasalized)
- “zh” as in “azure”

Iemanjá do rio yay-mā-zhah (as before)
doo -HEE- ooh

somos seus filhos SOH-mohs SAY-oos
FEE-leeyoos

For information about the composer
see: www.joanszymko.com

Commissioned by Dr. Phillip Stockton and the Mississippi University for Women Chamber Singers
in memory of Leslie Farrell Threadgill.

At the Shore of the World

Traditional *Candomblé* song texts
for the Orixá, Yemanjá (Bahia, Brazil); and
Rabindranth Tagore (1861-1941)

Joan Szymko

♩=84

Agogo

mp

S.

A.

T. solo (opt.) or section *mp* *mf*

Ye-man já, _____ Ye man - já _____

B.

Pno. *choral reduction; for rehearsal only*

optional piano accompaniment

mp *mf*

The musical score is written for a chamber ensemble. It begins with a tempo marking of ♩=84 and a 4/4 time signature. The Agogo part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents. The vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) are in a key of D major. The Tenor part includes a solo section starting with the lyrics 'Ye-man já, _____ Ye man - já _____'. The piano accompaniment is divided into a 'choral reduction; for rehearsal only' section and an 'optional piano accompaniment' section. The optional piano accompaniment features a bass line with a melodic accompaniment in the right hand.

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No. 29 from "Stray Birds"(1916) by Rabindranath Tagore (P.D.)

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Ag.

Lé (quinto)

S S O S t S O

mp

mf

Ye - man - já, Ye - man - já

Tutti

À - wa àà - b... ye... Ye - man - já, Ye - man - já

The image shows a page of a musical score, page 4. It features two vocal parts: Ag. (Agente) and Lé (quinto). The Ag. part has a melodic line with eighth notes and rests. The Lé (quinto) part has lyrics: "S S O S t S O". The piano accompaniment includes a right hand with chords and triplets, and a left hand with a bass line. Dynamics include *mp* and *mf*. A *Tutti* marking is present. A large green watermark "For personal use only" is diagonally across the page.

9

Ag.

Lé

Rum pi (conga)

p

S O O M S O O S

p

9

À-wa àà-bò a yó,

optional solo

Ye-man-já do rio so-mos

À-wa àà-bò a yó,

mp

for perusal only

13

mp

13

Tutti (*poco port.*)

se - us fil - hos _____ Ye - man - já do ri - o, _____ so-mos se - us fil

mf

Ye - man - já do ri - o, _____ so-mos se - us fil

3

3

3

17

mf

mf

mf

17

mf

mf

Ye - man - já, Ye - man - já,

- hos, Ye - man - já, Ye - man - já,

mf

Ye - man - já,

- hos, Ye - man - já, Ye - man - já,

mf

21

Piano accompaniment for measures 21-24, featuring a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand and a steady bass line in the left hand.

21

Vocal staves for measures 21-24, including lyrics: "Ye-man-já, à-wa àà-bo a yó". The music includes triplets and a forte (*f*) dynamic marking.

Piano accompaniment for measures 21-24, showing the right and left hand parts with chords and melodic lines.

Piano accompaniment for measures 21-24, showing the right and left hand parts with chords and melodic lines.

for perusal only

25

25

mf 3 3 *mf* 3 3

À wa àà bo a yó, à - wa àà bo a yó

f sempre 3 3 3 3

À-wa àà-bo a yó à-wa àà-bo a yó Ye - man

8

f *mf*

Ye man - já, Ye - man - já

mf *f*

À - wa àà bo a yó,

3 3 3 3

for perusal only

29

29

f Ye-man já, *mf* À-wa àà bo a yó, à - wa àa bo a yó Ye-man já,

já, À wa àà bo a yó, a àa-bo a yó Ye-man - já.

mf e man - já Ye-man - já.

f à - wa àà bo yó Ye - man - já.

33

33

f Ye-man-já do ri - o so-mos se - us fil-hos Ye - man-

mf Ye-man-já do ri - o so - se - us fil-hos Ye - man-

mf Ye-man-já do ri - o so-mos se - us fil-hos Ye - man-

mf Ye-man-já ri - o so-mos se - us fil-hos Ye - man-

mf

37

S.1 já do ri - o so-mos se - us fil - hos Ye-man - já, *mf* *f*

S.2 já do ri - o so-mos se - us *mf*

A. já do ri - o so-mos se - us fil - hos so - mos

T. já do ri - o Ye - man - já, *f*

B. já do ri - o

ff *f*

44

44

f *mp. div.* *mp* *molto legato*

À-wa àà-bo a yó, My heart

À-wa àà-bo a yó. My heart

hos, À-wa àà-bo yó, My heart

à - wa àà - bo a

À-wa àà-bo a yó.

molto legato

mf *f* *mp*

48

mp

mp

This block shows the piano accompaniment for measures 48-51. The top staff features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with a fermata over the final measure. The bottom staff provides a steady bass line of eighth notes. Dynamic markings of *mp* are present in both staves.

48

mf

beats her waves

mp

beats her waves

My heart

mp

beats her waves

my heart,

mp

Ye-man-já

mp

Mm

This block contains the vocal line and piano accompaniment for measures 48-51. The vocal line is written in treble clef with lyrics: "beats her waves", "My heart", "my heart,", and "Ye-man-já". The piano accompaniment includes a vocal line in treble clef and a bass line in bass clef. Dynamic markings include *mf* and *mp*. A vocalization "Mm" is written in the bass line.

This block shows the piano accompaniment for measures 52-55. The top staff has a melodic line with some grace notes, and the bottom staff has a bass line. The key signature changes to one flat (B-flat) in measure 54.

This block shows the piano accompaniment for measures 56-59. The top staff has a melodic line, and the bottom staff has a bass line. The key signature changes back to one sharp (F#) in measure 58.

for perusal only

52

52

mf

My heart be-fore waves

My heart

mp

my heart,

mp

heart,

Ye-man - já

mf

Ye-man - já

Ye - man

mp

Ye - ma - já

56

mf

mf

mf

56

f *ff*

at the shore of the world, _____ my heart, _____

my heart, _____ my heart, _____

f

my heart, _____ my heart, _____

mf

8 já _____ Ye-man-já, _____ Ye-man-já, _____

mf

Ye - ma - já _____

of the shore the

f *ff* *f*

60

pp *p*

pp *p*

pp *p*

like waves swelling and crashing on the shore

60 *p* *molto* *ff* *mf* *mp* *p*

My heart beats her waves at the shore of the world My

p *molto* *ff* *mf* *mp* *p*

My heart beats her waves at the shore the world, My

p *molto* *ff* *p* *mp*

My heart beats her waves at the shore

p *molto* *ff* *mf*

My heart beats her waves at the shore of the world

p *ff*

My heart beats her waves at the shore,

p *molto* *ffp* *mp* *p*

p *ff* *mf*

mp *mf* *mp*

63

mf

mf

mf

63

ff

f

ff

left blank

66

4/4

heart beats her waves _____ at the shore of the world and writes up-on it her

heart beats her waves _____ at the shore of world and writes up-on it her

mf mp mf

mf mp mf

mf mp p

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70

70

74

mp

70

74

74

70

mp

mf

sig-na-ture in tears with the words "I

70

mp

mf

sig-na-ture in tears with the words "I

74

74

74

mp

mf

74

74

74

mp

74

74

74

for Perusal Only

75

mf

75

f

love thee" "I love the "I love

f

love thee" ve thee." "I love

mp *mf* *f*

Ye - man - ja, Ye - man - ja, Ye - man - ja, Ye - man - ja

mf *f*

Ye - man - ja, Ye - man - ja

f *mf* *f*

mf

79

79

thee." À-wa àà-bo a yó.

thee." À-wa àà-bo a

à - wa àà - bo a yó.

-wa àà-bo a yó.

mf *f*