

JOAN SZYMKO

# What We Do—Now

No. 1 from  
*Lifting As We Climb*

Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the passage of the  
19th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States

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JOAN SZYMKO (b.1957)

With a catalog of over 100 choral works Joan Szymko's music is regularly performed at regional, national and international choral festivals, competitions and conferences. Notably, her music has been presented on stage or in sessions at every National Conference of the American Choral Directors Association since 2003. The ACDA recognized Szymko's lasting impact on the choral arts in North America by selecting her as a recipient of the prestigious Raymond W. Brock Memorial Commission (2010). She has been commissioned by all manner of choral ensemble: professional and community choirs, university and high school programs, select children's choirs, LGBTQ choruses and church choirs. Utilizing a familiar music vocabulary, she creates works that are nonetheless fresh and engaging; compelling and inspiring, her text selections are as notable as her music.

Joan Szymko lives and works in the beautiful Pacific Northwest. As resident composer she has enjoyed a fruitful collaboration with Portland-based Do Jump! Movement Theater (1995-present), creating underscoring for both local and major touring productions. A dynamic conductor, she has served on the choral music faculty of Portland State University (2013-15) and most notably, as Artistic Director of Aurora Chorus (1993-2000). As a visiting artist, Szymko workshops her compositions with choirs in a variety of educational and festival settings across the country and abroad. She has presented at regional and national ACDA conferences and was honored to have been invited to present a session on her own music in New Zealand at the 2020 World Symposium on Choral Music.

for more information: [www.joanszymko.com](http://www.joanszymko.com).

## NOTES

I accepted the 2020 Dr. Catherine Roma Commission Project commemorating the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment with the understanding that my composition would not only explore the historical fight for women's suffrage, but also speak to present day attacks on voting rights. "*What We Do-Now*" is the stand alone first movement of *Lifting As We Climb*, a choral narrative 30 minutes in length scored for women's choir, narrators (6) piano, drum kit and alto sax. Suffragists come to life and previously hidden voices of African American women fighting for the vote are heard. *Lifting As We Climb* looks back in time, but just as importantly it explores the present and a future that will require a diligent, informed public ready to fight for equality, democracy and the right to vote. Ellen Hagan comments on her poem, *What We Do-Now*: "This poem was meant to be a balm & salve for the tumultuous world we live in."

## What We Do—Now, by Ellen Hagan - after Gwendolyn Brooks

We mourn, we bless,  
we blow, we wail, we  
wind-down, we sip,  
we spin, we blind, we  
bend, bow & hem. We  
hip, we blend, we bind,  
we shake, we shine,  
shine. We lips & we  
teeth, we praise & protest.  
We document & we  
drama. We demand &  
we flow, fold & hang  
loose. We measure &  
we moan, mourn & whine  
low. & we live, and we  
breathe. & some of the time,  
we don't.  
Tonight, I am here. Here  
& tired. Here & awake,  
sure, & alive. Yes here &  
still, still here, still & here  
& still awake & still still  
alive."

Commissioned by GALA Choruses  
www.GalaChoruses.org  
for GALA Festival 2020 in Minneapolis, MN

# What We Do— Now

No. 1 from *Lifting As We Climb*

Ellen Hagan

Joan Szymko

The musical score is for the piece "What We Do— Now" by Ellen Hagan, No. 1 from "Lifting As We Climb" by Joan Szymko. It is a Swing Ballad in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. The score includes parts for Alto Saxophone, Soprano/Alto voices, and Piano. The Alto Sax part features a melodic line with triplets and a dynamic marking of *mf*. The Soprano/Alto part has a vocal line with lyrics: "mourn, we bless, we blow, we wail, we wind— down, we". The Piano part provides harmonic support with chords and bass lines, including triplets and dynamic markings of *mp* and *mf*. A large green watermark "for perusal use only" is overlaid on the piano part. The score is marked "Swing Ballad" and "Tutti Unison *mf*".

drums enter

**A** ♩=108

9

S  
sip, we spin, we blind, we bend, bow & hem bow & hem.

A  
bow & hem bow & hem.

9 **A** Straight eights ♩=108

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13

S

A  
We hip, we blend

13

*crisply*

*mp* *mf* *f* *mf*

17

S

A

*mf*

*cresc.* *f*

we bind, we shake, we shine, shine, shine.

17

*mf* *mp*

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20

S

A

*mp*

*mf* *cresc. poco a poco*

We hip, we blend we bind, we shake, we shine, shine,

20

*mf* *cresc. poco a poco*

**B**

23

*f*

S  
— shine. *f* We lips & we teeth, we praise and pro- test, we

A  
*f* We lips & we teeth, we praise and pro- test, we

23 **B**

26

S1  
S2  
praise and pro- test, we praise and pro - test... We lips & we teeth, we

A1  
A2  
praise and pro- test, we praise and pro - test... We lips & we teeth, we

26 **B**

29

*p*

S1  
S2  
A1  
A2

praise and pro - test, we praise and pro - test.

praise and pro - test, we praise and pro - test.

29

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32

*mp* *mf* *f*

*mp* *mf* *mp* *f*

*mp* *mf* *mf* *f*

S1  
S2  
A1  
A2

We doc-u-ment and we dra - ma, we doc-u-ment and we dra - ma.

We doc-u-ment and we dra - ma, we doc-u-ment and we dra - ma.

32

*mp* *mf* *f*

36 **C**

36 **C** like a warning bell

*f* *sempre*

39

*f*

39

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42 **D**

*f*

S  
A

Half of choir (mix S/A) *precise but not "choppy"*

*f* We de-mand and we

42 **D**



45 *Other Half* *Tutti* 3

S  
A

flow, We de-mand and we flow, We de-mand and we flow, fold and hang\_ loose.

49 *mf* *f*

S1 *mf* *f* *mf*

S2 *mf* *f* *mf*

A1 *mf*

A2

We meas-ure and\_ we moan, mourn\_ and\_ whine\_

We meas-ure and\_ we moan, mourn\_ and\_ whine low,

We meas-ure and\_ we moan,

53

S1  
low, whine low & we

S2  
mourn and whine low & we

A1  
A2  
mourn and whine low

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56

S1  
live and we breathe. & we live and we breathe & we live and we breathe.

S2  
live and we breathe. & we live and we breathe & we live and we breathe.

A1  
A2  
& we live and we breathe. & we live and we breathe.

♩=58  
**Molto meno mosso**

59  
S1 S2  
& some of the time we don't. To -

A1 A2  
& some of the time we don't. To -

59  
**Molto meno mosso**

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62 **E** ♩=120

Alto Sax

Tutti Unison

S  
A  
night, I am here. Here & ti - red. Here & a - wake, sure, and a - live.

62 **E** ♩=120

*pp* *p*

*p* *mp* *pp* *mp* *mf*

66

Alto Sax

*mf* *p* *mp*

S  
A

*mp* *mf*

Yes here & still, still here, still and here and still a - wake &

66

*mf*

Ped. simile

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70

*mf*

S  
A

still still a - live.

70