



Joan Szymko (b.1957)

Joan Szymko's choral music regularly receives performances at regional, national and international choral festivals, competitions and conferences; notably, at eight consecutive National Conferences of the American Choral Directors Association (2003-17). She is widely recognized as one of the foremost American composers of compelling repertoire for women's choir. The ACDA recognized Szymko's lasting impact on the choral arts in America by selecting her as the recipient of the prestigious Raymond W. Brock Memorial Commission in 2010. In addition to her self published catalog, Szymko has over sixty published titles with Santa Barbara Music, Roger Dean Music Publishing, Walton Music, earthsongs, Treble Clef Press and Yelton Rhodes Music. Composing for vocal ensembles is an extension of Joan's creativity as a choral director. Her passion for the singing voice, an embodied approach to sound, a dedication to craft and artistry, an insistence on quality texts—all relate to her work as a conductor and are reflected in her compositions. Abundant lyricism, rhythmic integrity and vigorous attention to text are hallmarks of her diverse and distinctive choral writing.

Joan Szymko lives and works in the beautiful Pacific Northwest. She enjoyed a fruitful collaboration with Portland based Do Jump! Movement Theater as resident composer (1995-2012), creating underscoring for major touring productions. She served on the choral music faculty of Portland State University (2013-15) and has lead Aurora Chorus as Artistic Director since 1993. As a visiting artist, she workshops her compositions with choirs in a variety of educational and festival settings across the country and abroad.

excerpted from "The Network of the Imaginary Mother"
by Robin Morgan

Blessed Be

Blessed be my brain that I may conceive of my own power.
Blessed be my breast that I may give sustenance to those I love.
Blessed be my womb that I may choose to create what I choose to create.
Blessed be my knees that I may bend so as not to break.
Blessed be my feet that I may walk the path of my highest will.

Notes

I was honored to be commissioned a second time by Anna Crusis Women's Choir (Philadelphia) to compose a work to their 40th Anniversary season. Founded in 1975, "Anna" is the oldest existing feminist choir in the United States and an early member of the GALA chorus network. To celebrate and commemorate Anna's ground breaking choral history, I selected an iconic text by Robyn Morgan, considered one of the founders of contemporary feminism, and author of over twenty books, including the now-classic feminist anthology, "Sisterhood is Powerful."

"Blessed Be" dares invoke the sacred while proclaiming a woman's innate right to manifest her own path. The words "blessed be" are sung three times as a refrain to each line of the empowering litany. The triad, or "3-ness", has a universal significance as a symbol of the unity of spirit, mind and body, all of which are celebrated in the text.

Attention should be paid to nuances in tempo and articulation as indicated in the score. To be sung boldly.

— Joan Szymko

Blessed Be

ROBIN MORGAN (b.1941)

JOAN SZYMKO

legato e sostenuto
♩=80
mf Bless-ed be my brain that I may con - ceive my own *f*
mf Bless-ed be my brain that I may con - ceive my own *f*
mf Bless-ed be my brain that I may con - ceive my own *f*

legato e sostenuto
♩=80
mf

for perusal only

7 *poco rit.* *poco meno mosso* ♩=72 *mf* *dim.* *mp* **Tempo primo** *p*
pow- er— Bless-ed be, bless-ed be, bless - ed be. Bless - ed be my
mf *dim.* *mp* *p*
pow - er— Bless-ed be, bless-ed be, bless - ed be. Bless - ed be my
mf *dim.* *mp* *p*
pow'r— Bless-ed be, bless-ed be, bless - ed be. Bless - ed be my

poco rit. *poco meno mosso* ♩=72 *dim.* **Tempo primo** *p*

4 13 *p* **Meno mosso**

S1
breast that I may give sus-ten ance to those I love. Bless-ed be,

S2
breast that I may give sus-ten ance to those I love. Bless-ed be,

A1
breast that I[ah] to those I love. Bless-ed

A2
breast that I may give sus-ten ance to those I love. Bless-ed be,

p

mp

Meno mosso

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18 rit. *mf* = 8 poco accel.

bless-ed be, bless - ed be. Bless-ed be my womb that I may

bless-ed be, bless - ed be. Bless-ed be my womb that I may

be, bless-ed be. Bless-ed be my womb that I may

Bless - ed be. Bless-ed be my womb that I may

rit. = 68 *mf* poco accel.

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accel.

ed be. *div*

Bless - ed be.

port. be,

that I may bend so as not to break, *mf* Bless - ed be,

that I may bend so as not to break, *mf* Bless - ed

(8) *accel.*

rit. **Tempo primo**

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Bless-ed be, *f* bless - ed be, *rit.* Bless-ed be my *sempre f*

Bless - ed be, *f* bless - ed be, *sempre f* Bless-ed be my *sempre f*

bless - ed be, *f* bless - ed be, *sempre f* Bless-ed be my *sempre f*

be, *f* bless - ed be, *rit.* bless - ed be, *Tempo primo* Bless-ed be my *sempre f*

cresc. *f* *sempre f*

rall.

43

div

feet that I may walk in the path of my high-est will.

feet that I may walk in the path of my high-est will.

feet that I may walk in the path of my high-est will.

feet that I may walk in the path of my high-est will.

rall.

for perusal only

48

♩=72

Bless-ed be

Bless-ed be

Bless-ed be

Bless-ed be

♩=72

52 *mf* **Meno mosso**
mp

Bless - ed be. _____ Bless - ed be,
Bless - ed be. _____ Bless - ed be,
Bless - ed be. _____ Bless - ed be,
Bless - ed be. _____ Bless - ed be,
Meno mosso
mp

for perusal only

55 *p*

bless - ed be, bless - ed be.
bless - ed be, bless - ed be.
bless - ed be, bless - ed be.
bless - ed be, bless - ed be.