

Ethan McGrath

THE TABERNACLE OF GOD

for SATB voices and organ

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Introductory Comments by the Composer

The impetus for this anthem was the Music in Worship event at the 2016 ACDA Southern Division conference in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Conductor Gerald Peel asked me if I would write something that his choir could sing for the event, which was to consist entirely of works featuring the word “alleluia.” In my search for texts, I was surprised to find that the bible actually contains very few usages of the word: it appears only four times in the entire King James Version, and they are all in Revelation chapter 19, from whence the text of Handel’s so-called “Hallelujah Chorus” is derived. Indeed, I decided to use Handel’s text, “Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth,” along with another passage that a friend had suggested to me: Revelation 21:1-4, about the “New Jerusalem” coming down from heaven.

The very florid, unbound melody played on the organ at the beginning, and at various points throughout the work, should be played quite expressively, without any sense of exactitude. It reflects the idea of both weightlessness and timelessness—like the clouds floating about the city as it descends to the earth. The tenor soloist represents the apostle John on the Isle of Patmos, who saw it all in a vision. The chorus in its first appearance is cast as the “great voice out of heaven,” presumably the voice of God himself, proclaiming in a grand fanfare that “the tabernacle of God is with men.” Then, in a reprisal of the quieter opening material, the significance of that proclamation is described by the soprano section: “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death...”

Now the alleluias begin—faintly at first, as if from a distance, being sung by the basses. Think of a regal coronation procession, beginning far away and gradually moving closer. The tenors, altos, and sopranos enter successively, as if more and more people are joining the throng, together forming an opulent tapestry of fugal polyphony that builds to an exultant fortissimo as the procession reaches its destination. When the “dust settles” in cascading sequences of Lydian and whole-tone scales, the florid opening motive returns in the organ and a solo soprano voice—an angel, as it were—emerges to gently intone the text, “for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

Like many of my compositions, this work is indebted most of all to Ralph Vaughan Williams and is inspired in part by his *Sancta Civitas*, an extended work for chorus and orchestra that features passages from the book of Revelation. My love of J. S. Bach, who also greatly influenced Vaughan Williams’ work, probably accounts in part for the quasi-fugue in the “alleluia” section. The influence of Debussy is no doubt also apparent in the enigmatic, “dreamy” harmonies. I thought this quite appropriate, since John was, in a sense, dreaming when he saw all these things. I hope that this anthem, in reminding us of that dream, will encourage us to never stop dreaming of a better world.

About the Composer

A musician of diverse skills and interests, Ethan McGrath has a passion for sharing music that brings hope and joy to its hearers and fosters a sense of community among its participants. His favorite means of doing so is as a composer and conductor of sacred choral works, in addition to his frequent performances as pianist and organist. A graduate of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, Ethan has also studied at Southern Adventist University and Friedensau Adventist University in Germany, where he received the Waltraud and Herbert Blomstedt Scholarship for his many musical activities, primarily as organist in the chapel. For his compositions he has also received awards from the Lawson-Gould Publishing Company and the Southeastern Composers’ League. An avid church musician, Ethan has served as organist at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church and First Baptist Church of Chattanooga, Tennessee. For more information, visit www.ethanmcgrath.com.

For the King's Quire
Gerald Peel, Conductor

The tabernacle of God

An anthem for SATB voices and organ

Text from
Revelation 21:1-4; 19:6

Music by
Ethan McGrath

Floating, dreamily (♩ = c. 69)

Choir

Organ

Swell

p

Pedal 8'

4 **Tenor solo** *mp*

And I saw a new heav-en and a new earth:

9 **Faster** (♩ = c. 80)

for the first heav-en and the first earth were passed a - way;

Faster (♩ = c. 80)

Sw.

mf

Manual

16 *poco rit.* **Tempo I**

and there was no more sea. _____

poco rit. **Tempo I**

p *mf*

Ped. + 16'

21 *mp* *cresc.*

And I John saw the ho - ly cit - y,

p

26 *poco allarg.* *mf* *a tempo* *p*

new Je - ru - sa - lem, com - ing down from God out of heav - en, _____

poco allarg. *a tempo* Chr.

6 6

30 *mp* *p*

pre - pared as a bride a - dorned for her hus - band. _____ And I

35 *cresc.* *rit.* *f* *a tempo*

Solo heard _____ a great voice out of heav - en say - ing,

35 *f marcato* Be - hold, the tab - er - nac - le of God is with

T *f marcato*

B

Sw. *cresc.* *rit.* *f marcato* *a tempo*

40 *mf dim.* men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his peo - ple, and God him - self shall

mf dim.

44 *poco rit.* *a tempo* In two (♩ = ♩) Sopranos

be with them, and be their God. _____ And God shall

p

poco rit. *a tempo* In two (♩ = ♩) Chr. *p*

pp Sw.

Ped. 8'

49

wipe a-way all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, _____

Sw. (both hands) *mf*

(Ped.) Man.

54

nei-ther sor-row, nor cry-ing, _____

p + 8' Reed *mf*

Ped. + 16'

poco rit. a tempo

58 Sopranos & altos *p* *pp* *rit.*

nei-ther shall there be an-y more pain: _____

Tenors & basses *p* *rit.*

for the for - mer things are passed a -

- 8' Reed *poco rit. a tempo* *p* *pp* *rit.*

62 *Regally* (♩ = c. 92)

S A *pp* *p* *cresc. poco a poco*

T *pp* *pp* *cresc. poco a poco*

B *pp* *pp* *cresc. poco a poco*

way. _____ Al - le - lu - ia, _____ al - le -

way. _____ Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, _____ al - le - lu -

Regally (♩ = c. 92)

pp *cresc. poco a poco*

68 *mf cresc. poco a poco*

S Al - le -

A *mp cresc. poco a poco* Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, *mf* Al -

T 8 lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, *mf cresc. poco a poco*

B ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - a, *mf cresc. poco a poco*

mf cresc. poco a poco

73 *poco*

lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le -

cresc. poco a poco

- le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le -

8 al - le - lu - ia, a - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le -

mf cresc. poco a poco

al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le -

poco rit. **Faster** (♩ = c. 100)

78

f *cresc.* *ff*

lu - ia, al-le - lu - ia, al - - - le - lu - ia, al - - - le - lu - - -

f *cresc.* *ff*

lu - ia, al-le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - - -

f *cresc.* *ff*

lu - ia, al-le - lu - ia, al - - - le - lu - ia, al - - - le - lu - ia,

f *cresc.* *ff*

lu - ia, al-le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,

poco rit. **Faster** (♩ = c. 100)

84

dim. poco a poco. *rit. poco a poco*

ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le -

dim. poco a poco.

ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le -

dim. poco a poco.

al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,

dim. poco a poco.

al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,

rit. poco a poco

90

Tempo I (♩ = c. 69) **In two** (♩ = ♩)

p *p* *pp*

lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia: al - le - lu - ia: al - le - lu - ia:

lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia: al - le - lu - ia: al - le - lu - ia:

al - le - lu - ia: al - le - lu - ia:

Tempo I (♩ = c. 69) **In two** (♩ = ♩)

Chr. *p*

Sw. (left hand)

Ped. 8'

96

Solo
mp

for the Lord — God om - nip - o - tent reign - eth. —

(♩ = ♩)

Tutti

102

p

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. ***pp*** A - - - men.

p

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - - - ia.

p

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - - - ia.

p

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - - - ia.

(♩ = ♩)

110

pp

A - - - men.

pp

A - - - men.

pp

A - - - men.

4' Flute

p

6

3

3