

Ross C. Bernhardt

# EXCELSIOR

*Mixed choir, unaccompanied*



2011

 **SWIRLY MUSIC**  
[www.SwirlyMusic.org](http://www.SwirlyMusic.org)

# COMPOSER'S NOTE

I have enjoyed Longfellow's poetry for many years—"Excelsior" in particular. However, I've never managed to develop a huge amount of sympathy for the poem's protagonist. Here we have a youth who ignores the advice of everyone around him that his journey was life-threatening. Although a part of me is saddened by the youth's eventual loss of life, I feel that perhaps it was best that he didn't contribute to the gene pool.

I have, therefore, approached the poem in a whimsical, tongue-in-cheek manner, illustrating the "Excelsior" journey with a parallel satirical journey through 500 years of composers and musical styles. My compliments—and sincere apologies—to Purcell, Mozart, Beethoven, Victoria, everyone from the Big Band era, and the composer of the theme song from the "Underdog" cartoon show, which shares the same poetic meter.

This composition won first prize in the Longfellow Choral Composition Competition in 2011.

*All of the winning works were of high quality, but the most original and entertaining was the last performed: "Excelsior" by Ross C. Bernhardt. Texas composer Bernhardt does in music what James Thurber accomplished in a cartoon — a whimsical and lighthearted spoof of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's admonition to strive ever "onward and upward."*

Christopher Hyde  
Portland (ME) Press-Herald, March 4, 2012

# EXCELSIOR

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow  
(1807-82)

Ross C. Bernhardt  
(ASCAP)

$\text{♩} = 90$  Ponderous

Soprano

Alto

Tenor *mp*

Bass *mp vocal pizzicato*

Doot doo doot doot doo doot doot doo doot

Bm bm bm bm bm bm

4

S *mf*

A *mf*

T

B

The shades of night were fall - ing fast, \_\_\_\_\_ As

The shades of night were fall - ing fast, \_\_\_\_\_ As

doot doo doot doot doo doot doot doo doot

bm bm bm bm bm bm bm

7

S through an Al - pine vil - lage passed \_\_\_\_\_ A

A through an Al - pine vil - lage passed \_\_\_\_\_

T doot doo doot doot doo doot

B bm bm bm bm bm bm

9

S youth, who bore, 'mid snow and ice, A ban - ner with the strange de - vice, Ex -

A youth, who bore, 'mid snow and ice, A ban - ner with the strange de - vice, Ex -

T doo doo doo doo

B doo doo doo bm bm bm bm

11

S cel - si-or! Doot doo doot doot doo doot *mp*

A cel - si-or! Doot doo doot doot doo doot *mp*

T doot doo doot doot His brow was sad; his eye be - neath, \_\_\_\_\_ *mf*

B *mp* bm bm bm bm bm bm

14

S doot doo doot doo doot doot doo doot doot doo doo doo doo doo And

A doot doo doot doo doot doot doo doot doot doo doo doo doo doo doo

T — Flashed like a fal-chion from its sheath, —

B bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm

17 *mf*

S like a sil-ver clar-ion rung The ac-cents of that un-known tongue, Ex-cel-si-or!

A doo doo doo doo doo doo Ex-cel-si-or!

T doo doo doo doo doo doo cel-si-or!

B doo doo doo doo doo doo cel-si-or!

Swing 8ths  $\text{♩} = 80$

20 *f*

S — In hap-py homes he saw the light — Of

A — Bop bah doo dah —

T — Bop bah doo dah —

B — doo doom doom doom doom doom doo doo doom doo doo doom doo doo doo

*imitate string bass*

23

S house - hold fires gleam warm and bright; A - bove, the spec - tral

A Bop bah doo dah — Bop bah

T Bop bah doo dah — Bop bah

B doom doom doom doo doo doom doo doom doo doo doo doom doom doo doo

26

S gla - ciers shone, And from his lips es - caped a groan, Ex - cel - si - or!

A doo dah — from his lips es - caped a groan, Ex - cel - si - or!

T doo dah — from his lips es - caped a groan, Ex - cel - si - or!

B doom doo doo doom doom from his lips es - caped a groan, Ex - cel - si - or!

31

$\text{♩} = 80$  With pathos

*mp*

S "Try not the

A *p* Loo loo

T *p* Loo loo

B *subito p* — doom doom doom doo loo loo loo loo loo loo Ex - cel - si - or! loo

38 *mf*

S Pass!" the old man said: "Dark low-ers the tem - pest o - ver-head, The

A loo loo loo loo loo loo Loo loo loo loo loo loo loo loo

T loo loo loo loo loo loo Loo loo loo loo loo loo loo loo

B loo loo loo loo loo loo loo loo loo loo loo loo loo loo The *mf*

45 *mf*

S roar - ing tor-rent is deep and wide! And loud that clar - ion voice re plied, Ex

A The tor - rent deep and wide! That voice re - plied, Ex -

T The tor - rent wide! And loud that voice re - plied, Ex -

B tor - - - - rent is wide! And loud that voice re - plied, Ex -

53 *mp* *mf*  $\text{♩} = 108$

S cel - - - si - or! Loo loo loo loo loo loo loo loo "O stay!" the

A cel - - - si - or! Loo loo loo loo loo loo loo loo

T cel - - Ex - cel - si - or! Loo loo loo loo

B cel, Ex - cel - si - or!

59 mai - den said,

S loo loo loo loo loo loo loo loo Thy

A loo loo loo loo loo loo loo loo

T loo loo loo loo loo loo

B *mf*

And rest thy wea - ry head,

62

S wea - ry head, thy wea - ry head up - on this breast!" *f* *p*

A wea - ry head up - - on this breast!" *f* *p*

T wea - ry head up - - on this breast!" *f* *p*

B wea - ry head up - - on this breast!" *f*

64

S tear, a tear stood in his bright blue eye, a tear, a tear stood in his

A tear, a tear stood in his bright blue eye, a tear, a tear stood in his

T tear, a tear stood in his bright blue eye, a tear, a tear stood in his

B *p* vocal pizzicato  
dm dm



67 *molto rit.* *f*

S bright blue eye, Ex-cel-si-

A bright blue eye, *mf* But still, but still— he an-swered with a sigh, *f* Ex-cel-si-

T bright blue eye, Ex-cel-si-

B dm dm dm dm dm dm dm But still, but still— he an-swered with a sigh, *f* Ex-cel-si-

70 *mp*

S or! Ex-cel-si - or! "Be - ware the pine-tree's with - ered branch! Be -

A or! Ex-cel-si - or! *mp* "Be - ware the pine-tree's with - ered branch! Be -

T or! Ex-cel-si - or! *mp* "Be - ware the pine-tree's with - ered branch! Be -

B or! Ex-cel-si - or! *mp* "Be - ware the pine-tree's with - ered branch! Be -

74 *mp*

S ware the aw - ful a - va - lanche!" This was the pea-sant's last Good - night, A

A ware the aw - ful a - va - lanche!" *mp* This was the pea-sant's last Good - night, A

T ware the aw - ful a - va - lanche!" *mp* This was the pea-sant's last Good - night, A

B ware the aw - ful a - va - lanche!" *mp* This was the pea-sant's last Good - night, A

Excelsior

♩=108

79 *ff* *mp*

S voice re-plied, far up the height, Ex - cel - si-or! At

A voice re-plied, far up the height, Ex - cel - si-or

T voice re-plied, far up the height, Ex - cel - si-or!

B voice re-plied, far up the height, Ex - cel - si-or! *mp like chant* Ex - cel - si - or!

85 *mp*

S break of day as hea - ven-ward At break of day, as hea - ven -

A At break of day At break of day, at break of day as hea-ven

T At break of day

B At break of day, as hea-ven-ward,

90 *mf* *mp*

S ward, The pi - ous monks of Saint Ber nard

A ward, The pi - ous monks of Saint Ber - nard

T The pi - ous monks of Saint Ber - nard Ut-tered the oft-re-peat - ed

B The pi - ous monks of Saint Ber - nard Ut-tered the oft-re - peat - ed

Excelsior *molto accel.*

♩=150

Underdogesque

93 *mf*

S A voice cried through the star - tled air,

A *mf*  
A voice cried through the star - tled air,

T *mf*  
prayer, A voice cried through the star - tled air,

B *mf*  
prayer, A voice cried through the star - tled air, Bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm

*mf* Oo whah oo whah  
*mf* imitate string bass/tuba

97 *mf*

S A

A *mf*  
Ex - cel - si-or! Ex - cel - si-or!

T  
oo whah oo whah oo whah oo whah oo whah oo doo doo doo

B  
bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm

100

S trav'-ller, by the faith-ful hound, Half - bur-ied in the snow was found, Still grasp-ing in his hand of ice That

A  
Oo whah oo doo doo whah oo doo doo whah oo doo

T  
doo whah oo doo doo whah oo doo doo whah oo doo

B  
bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm

Excelsior

103 *f*

S ban - ner with the strange de - vice, Ex - cel - si - or! Ex - cel - si - or!

A doo doo doo doo doo doo doo cel - si - or! Bah bah bah Ex - cel - si - or!

T doo doo doo doo cel - si - or! Bah bah bah Ex - cel - si - or!

B doo doo doo doo cel - si - or! Ex - cel - si - or! Ex - cel - si - or! Ex -

107

S There in the twi - light cold and gray,

A bah bah bah bah Doo doo doot doo doo doot doo doo doot doo doo doot

T bah bah bah bah Doo doo doot doo doo doot doo doo doot doo doo doot

B cel - si - or, bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm

110

S Life - less, but beau - ti - ful, he lay,

A doo doo doot doo doo doot doo doo doot doo doo doot

T doo doo doot doo doo doot doo doo doot doo doo doot

B bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm

112

S And from the sky, se - rene and far, A voice feel, like a

A Bah dah daht bah dah daht bah dah daht bah dah daht bah dah daht bah dah daht

T Bah dah daht bah dah daht bah dah daht bah dah daht bah dah daht bah dah daht

B bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm

115

S fall - ing star, Ex - cel - si - or! Chk Chk Loo

A bah dah dah dah Ex - cel - si - or! Chk Chk Loo

T bah dah dah dah Ex - cel - si - or! Bmm Loo

B bah daht dah Ex - cel - si - or! Bm Loo

*mp* *absolutely no rit.* *ff* *OK, you can go ahead and rit. now* *mp*