Handel wrote five different settings of this anthem, ranging from three-part accompanied chorus to six-part double chorus with large orchestra. I first heard the three-part version and loved it, and that is certainly the version best suited for smaller church choirs.

I sought to purchase copies of the three-part version for our choir but was unable to locate a publisher. A search by our commercial provider of published scores also came up empty. As a result I have prepared this SAB version from an edition published in 1871–72 for the German Handel Society by the admirable editor Friedrich Chrysander (1826–1901).

I am deeply touched by this Psalm, and equally by Handel's musical setting. I love its pervasive minor mode, the insistent yearning heard in overlapping voices, the evocation of flowing streams in extended vocal phrases (see especially the bass, measures 39-42).

The text, Psalm 42:1, is a simile:

As pants the hart for cooling springs,
so longs my soul for thee, O Lord.

Handel sets every occurrence of the pivotal phrase "so longs..." as a harmonic suspension: a note tied over—or a three-note motif sighing downward—into musical tension. I count thirteen of these "so longs." They are a marvelous example of Handel's gift for musical word painting.

Albert Blackwell
January 16, 2012
As PANTS the Hart for COOLing Streams

Psalm 42:1

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)  
Edited by Albert Blackwell

As pants the hart for cooling streams, for cooling streams, as pants the hart for cooling streams, as pants the hart for cooling streams, as pants the hart for

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cooling, cooling streams, for cooling, cooling

as pants the hart for cooling streams

hart for cooling streams, as pants the hart for cooling streams,

cooling, cooling streams, for cooling streams,

cooling, cooling streams, for cooling streams,
as pants the hart for cooling, cooling
as pants the hart for cooling,

cooling streams, for cooling, cooling
cooling streams, for cooling, cooling
streams, for cooling streams, so longs my soul for thee, O

stream, for cooling, cooling streams,

streams, for cooling, cooling streams,

God.

so longs my soul, so longs my soul, for thee, O God, so longs my

so longs my soul for thee, O
As pants the hart for cooling streams, for soul for thee, O God.

As pants the hart, God, so longs my soul for thee, O God. As

cooling, cooling streams, so longs my soul, so longs my soul for thee, O pants the hart for cooling streams, so longs my soul for thee, O
God. As pants the hart for cooling, cooling streams, so longs my God, so longs my soul for thee, so longs my soul for thee, cooling, cooling streams, for cooling streams, so longs my soul for thee, so longs my soul for thee, for thee, O God, so longs my soul for thee, so
longs my soul for thee, O God.

longs my soul for thee, O God.

longs my soul for thee, O God.