

## **Psalm 15 & Psalm 42**

by  
Heinrich Schütz

SATB  
General Use

Heinrich Schütz (1585–1672) composed four-part choral settings for all one hundred and fifty of the biblical Psalms. This admirable collection, first published in 1628, ranges from relatively straightforward settings to strikingly complex. For congregational singing, almost all are too complex. Therefore Schütz's music has rarely appeared in hymnals, in contrast to similar compositions by Schütz's predecessors Claude Goudimel and Louis Bourgeois who have provided numerous hymn tunes.

For choirs and choruses, however, these miniature masterpieces are a treasury. Ensembles of all sizes and degrees of ability can enjoy them, singing in parts or in unison, *a cappella* or to the accompaniment of organ, winds, or strings. At first the rhythms and harmonies startle us, but surprise soon yields to delight in what seems like inevitability. Each Psalm is a dance—joyous, reflective, or somber in mood, but always patterned and pulsing.

One facet of Schütz's musical genius is his sensitivity to texts. In this adaptation Marian and I have attempted to match English lyrics to Schütz's music as well as Schütz matched his music to the German of his texts. We have exactly duplicated his meter, syllable placement, and rhyme scheme. (Metronome markings are editorial suggestions only.)

The German version of the Psalms that Schütz used, however, is not a translation but a paraphrase, and it takes excessive liberties with the biblical text. We have not simply translated the German, therefore, but rather followed standard English translations of the Psalms, using the Hebrew text as a touchstone. Our diction echoes the King James Version of the Bible, which appeared in 1611.

Additional Schütz Psalms are available in our collection *The Psalms of David: 24 Psalms for the Church's Year* (Oxford University Press, 2007).

### **Psalm 15**

Psalm 15 is on the difficult end of the Schütz spectrum of complexity. The melody is angular and chromatic, the meters are irregular, the harmonies are kaleidoscopic. The setting's most remarkable feature is the long melisma toward the end. The music undulates downward and through a crunching dissonance at the bottom, thereby accentuating (in this English version) the Psalm's key words "truth," "good," "endure" and "overthrown."

### **Psalm 42**

Located near the middle of the spectrum of difficulty, Psalm 42 expresses longing for God in gently rising and falling phrases. Then the setting descends into a lower register and a minor mode, coinciding with the lament, "For I am mocked continually...." The music recovers major modality to conclude with reference to God as Savior.

Albert Blackwell  
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# Psalm 15

English adaptation by  
Albert and Marian Blackwell

Heinrich Schütz (1585–1672)

$\text{♩} = 68$

Who in thy tent, O God, may dwell? Who may as - cend thy ho - ly hill? Who -  
Who hath no guile up - on the tongue, nor un - to friends hath e - vil done, heap -  
Who doth all wick - ed - ness dis - card, hold - eth the pure in high re - gard, go -  
Who doth not lend in hope of gain, nor in - no - cence by bribe pro - fane. All

3

ev - er liv - eth right - eous - ly, and whose heart speak - eth  
eth on neigh - bors no re - proach, nor doth on oth - ers'  
eth from good - ness not a - stray, doth in the truth en -  
those who make these things their own shall nev - er - more be

5

truth good - ure o -  
ful - ly.  
en - croach.  
al - way.  
ver - thrown.

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# Psalm 42

English adaptation by  
Albert and Marian Blackwell

Heinrich Schütz (1585–1672)

$\text{♩} = 76$

As pants the deer for cool-ing streams, my thirst - y soul de - sir - eth calm  
My tears pour forth, my dai - ly food; my heart and soul are heav - y, as  
My heart is heav - ing in my breast; the rap - ids o - ver-whelm me. I

3

glades where liv - ing wa - ter gleams, and God's own face in - spir - eth. When  
I cry out to thee, O God: "Why such dis - qui - et in me?" My  
cry to God in my dis - tress: "Why is my heart so heav - y?" My

5

shall my God ap - pear to me? For I am mocked con - tin - ual - ly: "Where  
soul, trust God's de - liv - er - ance; hope yet in God, whose count - e - nance will  
soul, re - call God's stead-fast love; trust yet in help from heav'n a - bove; give

7

is thy God and Sa - - - vior?"  
be thy help for ev - - - er."  
praise to God thy Sa - - - vior.