Psalm 67
by
Charles Ives

SATB with Organ Accompaniment

General

Charles Ives wrote Psalm 67 in the 1890s for two unaccompanied choirs, SSAA and TTBB, singing in two different keys simultaneously. His younger contemporaries Henry Cowell and Sidney Robertson Cowell describe the effect as “mysterious grandeur.” Among his numerous Psalm settings, Ives wrote, his father regarded Psalm 67 as “the best for singing in church.”

Given the extraordinary complexities of his piece, however, we cannot be surprised that even Ives “had difficulty in the New Haven choirs” when he asked them to sing it. For smaller church choirs today the difficulties are prohibitive, and many churches must be denied this numinous musical offering.

With this arrangement I hope to make Psalm 67 accessible to non-professional church choirs. I have divided two climactic measures into SATB. For the remainder of the anthem the choir sings in unison while the organ preserves the full richness of Ives’ polytonal harmonies.

The structure of the original anthem is ABA, with a concluding benediction in the style of Anglican chant. I have omitted the B section—a fiercely difficult fugal outburst expressive of the text “O let the nations be glad and sing for joy....” The two outer sections and the benediction seem me to retain textual integrity and musical coherence, and to evoke the mystery and grandeur of Ives’ original.

Albert Blackwell
June 20, 2012
Psalm 67

Andante maestoso  

Charles Ives (1874-1954)  
arr. Albert Blackwell

Women  

Men  

Organ  

God be mer-ci-ful un-to us, and bless us; and  

cause his face to shine up-on us; that thy way may be known up-on  

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Let the people praise thee, O God. Let all the people praise thee. Then shall the
earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God,

shall bless us. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.