

Sean Michael Salamon

The Sky Calls to Us

for Mixed Choir

December 2011

The Sky Calls to Us,

a setting of two quotations by Carl Sagan:

No. 1 The Sky Calls to Us

The sky calls to us.
If we do not destroy ourselves,
We will, one day, venture to the stars.

No. 2 We're Made of Star-Stuff

Some part of our being knows
this is where we came from.
We long to return.
And we can—
because the cosmos is also within us.
We're made of star-stuff.
We are a way for the cosmos
to know itself.

The Sky Calls to Us, for unaccompanied mixed choir, had been brewing in my mind for a while before I ever wrote a note of it. When I was ten, I was introduced to Carl Sagan through his masterwork documentary, Cosmos, and it truly changed my life. Carl's quiet passion for nature and the universe shaped my worldview. His teachings and writings influenced my opinions on a multitude of things. Consequently, I had known for a long time that I wanted to write homage to him, a man who died before I was old enough to ever know his name.

In deciding to set his text to music, I knew I faced a challenge because it was prose. Because of this, I was careful to find two quotations that were exceptionally poetic. These particular ones—loaded with metaphor and vivid imagery—could pass for poetry awfully well. They express a vision of Carl's that was central to his life: that humans will eventually wade out into the cosmos and become a starfaring species. What a glorious prospect this was: that someday, maybe soon, we would set sail for the universe which bore us, and achieve communion with our most distant ancestors, the stars. It is with this spirit that I wrote this piece and present it now.

It may be performed by a choir of eight or larger. Keep in mind that larger forces may obscure the clarity of the tone required, especially in No. 1, which must be done senza vibrato. However, with larger forces it will be easier to execute parts which call for staggered breathing.

—Sean Michael Salamon

The Sky Calls to Us

Lento sostenuto, senza vibrato sempre

medium

Soprano

Ooh* *pp*

Alto

pp Ooh*

Tenor

Bass

mf *mf* *sub. p*

6

S

Ee†

Aw grad. close to "mm"

The sky

A

Ee†

Aw grad. close to "mm"

1sts: The sky

T

8

2nds: The sky calls to us

The sky

B

6

Aw grad. close to "mm"

* The "ooh" should be as closed as possible with the lips still parted.

† The "ee" should flip suddenly from the preceding vowel and sounds like a German "ü."

calls to us

Moving forward ♩=60

mp

S
caw _____ We will, one day, we will, one

A
caw _____ ee ng‡ If we do not _____

T
caw ee ng‡ If we do not _____

B
caw ee ng‡ If we do not _____

‡ This is an immediate flip to a hum with the mouth open and rounded, and the soft palate closed.

15

S
day, if we do not de-stroy our - selves, venture to the

A
_____ de - stroy _____ our selves, We'll ven - ture to the

T
_____ de - stroy _____ our selves, We'll ven - ture to the

B
_____ de - stroy _____ our - selves, We'll ven - ture to the

19 *sub. p*

S stars — Ah

A stars — Ah

T stars — Ah

B stars — Ah

Tempo I

23 *più p*

S Ng

A Ng

T The sky calls to us. If we do not de-destroy our -

B The sky calls to us. If we do not de-destroy our -

Suddenly faster; rall. - -

28 *mp*

S We will, one day Ng

A We will, one day Ng

T *mp* selves, We will, one day Ng

B *mp* selves, We will, one day Ng Ven-ture to the

32 *pp*

S Ah Ng Ah

A *pp* Ah Ng Ah

T *pp* stars. Ah Ah

B *pp* Ah Ng Ah

We're Made of Star-Stuff

Hushed but energetic (♩=60), with minimal vibrato

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

p marked; stagger breaths

p bell tones; stagger breaths

p Some part

pp

Loo

Loo

S

A

T

B

of our be-ing knows this is where we came from.

pp echo

Some part of our be-ing knows this is where we came

loo

6 *pp echo*

S We long to re - turn, we

A

T 8 from. *p* We long to re - turn, we long

B 6 *pp echo* We long to re -

9 long to re - turn. Nn

A 9 Loo Nn

T 8 to re - turn. Nn

B 9 turn, we long to re - turn. Nn

13 *mf*
S And we can, we can,

13 *p* *mf*
A nn And we can, we can,

13 *p* *mf*
T 8 nn And we can, we can,

13 *mp* *mf*
B nn We can,

17 *sub. p* *mf*
S We can be - cause the cos - mos is al - so wi - thin us. We are made of

17 *sub. p* *mf*
A We can be - cause the cos - mos is al - so wi - thin us. We are made of

17 *sub. p* *mf*
T 8 We can be - cause the cos - mos is al - so wi - thin us. We are made of

17 *sub. p* *mf*
B We can be - cause the cos - mos is al - so wi - thin us. We are made of

No. 2: We Are Made of Star-Stuff

22 *p* *pp*
S star-stuff. Nn
A star-stuff. Nn *pp*
T star-stuff. Nn *p* *pp*
B star-stuff. Nn *p* *pp*

Detailed description: This block contains the first system of the musical score, measures 22 through 25. It features four staves: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). Each staff begins with a measure number '22'. The Soprano staff has a melodic line starting on a half note, followed by eighth notes, and ending with a half note. The Alto staff has a similar melodic line. The Tenor staff has a melodic line starting on a half note, followed by eighth notes, and ending with a half note. The Bass staff has a melodic line starting on a half note, followed by eighth notes, and ending with a half note. Dynamics include *p* (piano) and *pp* (pianissimo). The lyrics 'star-stuff.' are written below the first measure of each staff. The vocal parts are marked with 'Nn' (no note) in the second measure.

27 *p* *pp echo*
S We are a way
A Loo *pp*
T *p* We are a way for the
B *pp echo* We are a

Detailed description: This block contains the second system of the musical score, measures 27 through 30. It features four staves: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). Each staff begins with a measure number '27'. The Soprano staff has a melodic line starting on a half note, followed by eighth notes, and ending with a half note. The Alto staff has a melodic line starting on a half note, followed by eighth notes, and ending with a half note. The Tenor staff has a melodic line starting on a half note, followed by eighth notes, and ending with a half note. The Bass staff has a melodic line starting on a half note, followed by eighth notes, and ending with a half note. Dynamics include *p* (piano) and *pp* (pianissimo). The lyrics 'We are a way' are written below the first measure of each staff. The vocal parts are marked with 'Loo' (no note) in the second measure.

30

S — for the cos - mos to know — it - self. —

30

A

30

T cos - mos to know — it - self. —

30

B way — for the cos - mos to know — it - self. —

33

S — — — — — *pp* — — — — — *f* — — — — —

Ah Nah nah

33

A Loo — — — — — *pp* — — — — — *f* — — — — —

Nah nah

33

T — — — — — *pp* — — — — — *f* — — — — —

Ah Nah nah

33

B — — — — — *pp* — — — — — *f* — — — — —

Ah Nah nah



Sean Michael Salamon is a student of Nancy Galbraith at Carnegie Mellon University. He is equally conversant in the musical languages of classical music and musical theatre, having been most influenced by Bach, Sondheim, Vaughan Williams and Bartók. Since arriving at Carnegie Mellon, he has written music for both the concert hall and the stage. His pieces have been performed by ensembles in several cities across the United States, as well as Canada and Romania. His ballet, *Hard Times* (co-written with Andrea Beschel and Mitch Marois) was premiered at the CMU School of Drama's Playground Festival. When not composing, he sings in the Carnegie Mellon Concert Choir, and at Trinity Cathedral in downtown Pittsburgh. He is also the music director of Carnegie Mellon's all-male a cappella group, The Originals. Additionally, he is an Eagle Scout.