

Program Notes for Be Still and Know

Be Still and Know was originally written for SATB choir and solo cello. It was commissioned as part of the American Composers Forum Faith Partners Program, funded by the Otto Bremer Foundation, and premiered by the joint choirs of the Colonial Church of Edina and Mount Zion Temple. In 2009, it was revised with the addition of piano, and premiered by the Northwestern College

The text is taken from Psalm 46, in which the psalmist confesses trust and hope in God. Though creation itself seems to be in great upheaval, God continues to sustain, bless, and deliver his people. God's voice speaks directly as we are asked to *Be still*, or *Cease striving*, and *know* or *acknowledge* God's mighty and saving acts.

Musically, the cello introduces the piece with a plaintive solo. The choir quietly introduces the words *Be still and know that I am God*. This is followed by a refrain set in Hebrew that occurs three times in the piece: Adonai tz'vaot imanu; misgav lanu Elohei Ya'akov. (Adonai Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.)

During the third verse, the musical intensity increases as God's power is illustrated in the text. The composition eventually closes with a return to the same musical material as the opening, but altered to reflect a greater sense of peace.