

Program Notes for Hinei Mah Tov: Two Brothers

Hinei Mah Tov: Two Brothers was composed as part of the American Composers Forum Faith Partners Residency Program, and was premiered by the combined Children's Choirs of Mount Zion Temple (St. Paul, Minnesota) and the Colonial Church of Edina (Minneapolis, Minnesota), in June of 2005.

The narrated text for this composition is based on a Hebrew legend, and is taken from a children's book by Florence B. Freedman called Brothers. "I first began reading this story to my children when they were young, about 17 or 18 years ago," states composer, Linda Tutas Haugen. The story is set long, long, ago, in the land of Israel, and is about two brothers who grew up on their father's farm, helping their father plant and harvest his crop. When their father grew old, he divided his lands equally between his two sons, and instructed them always to be friends and help each other.

"And that is what they did. In a bad year when the rain did not fall and the wheat dried up, the two brothers worried about each other. More than just coincidence caused each brother to choose exactly the same way of helping each other. They were prompted by a legacy of love and caring -- a legacy passed on to them by their father and which they passed on to others."*

This story celebrates the phrase, taken from Psalm 133, How good it is for brothers/people to live together in friendship and unity. The children's choirs are divided in half, and sing this phrase first in the traditional Hebrew, and then in English. "Musically, I chose to set each of these phrases in different meters. I did this to preserve the integrity of each language with different accents and contours, and also to symbolize the coming together of two different groups of people," says Haugen. After the Hebrew and English texts are sung separately, the choirs are combined and sing both texts together.

Different keys are used to illustrate each brother's "traveling music" from his own barn to his brother's barn. When the two brothers finally meet in between, both tonalities and musical material are used at the same time, and fit together providing the climax of the

piece. Short musical fragments of the traditional folk tune, Hinei Mah Tov, are also interspersed throughout the work. These musical motives can be found in the instrumental parts, especially in the clarinet and cello.

Hinei Mah Tov: Two Brothers was conceived in the spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood between these two congregations, and highlights the importance of empathy and love in relationships with others.

*Taken from the book, Brothers