

Program Notes for Psalm 42

Psalm 42 (for two sopranos, harp, and cello) was composed for Cantor Rachel Stock Spilker and Cantor Jennifer Blum at Mount Zion Temple. It is based on Psalms 42 and 43 (in many Hebrew manuscripts Psalms 42 and 43 constitute one psalm with a shared refrain), in which the author longs to be with God at the temple. The imagery of water and thirst suggest that God is a necessity for life. Distress, separation, and sadness are also expressed, but in the refrain, the writer looks to God for saving help.

The second verse again alludes to the trouble in the psalmist's life, but ends by confidently acknowledging God's love and presence. The high point of the composition is reached in the third verse, where the author asks God to send forth light and truth to deliver him. This psalm is both a prayer to God for help, and an expression of praise, faith, and hope.

The poetry of this psalm is especially descriptive and a wonderful text with which to work. I was also happy to include a harp in the instrumentation because of the reference in the text. It is my wish that these words and music will touch your hearts.

Psalm 42 was composed as part of the American Composers Forum's Faith Partners Residency Program. This ecumenical program, designed by the American Composers Forum Minnesota Chapter and funded by the Otto Bremer Foundation, enables religious institutions to select a composer to create original musical works appropriate for use in the worship services of participating congregations. Consortium members are Mount Zion Temple, St. Paul, MN, and the Colonial Church of Edina, Edina, MN.