W. Jay Sydeman

Angels
SA a cappella
(c. 1986)

For Altos and Sopranos
SA a cappella
(c. 1986)

A Non-Nuclear Canon
Three-Part Female Choir
(c. 1987)

Angels: It is exactly forty years after the composing of "Angels" that I write this commentary. It is especially poignant since I literally just finished reading a lecture by Rudolf Steiner about what transpires after we pass through the "Gate of Death".

According to Steiner, our first experience is an awakening to the world of spirit and the hierarchies contained therein, and most specifically the angelic realm which has helped to direct our life in the physical body. So these concepts motivated the text of "Angels" and its subsequent music … "angel visions … listen … listen … "

"For Altos and Sopranos" is an eminently practical piece. I was teaching at the Rudolf Steiner College in Sacramento. The small student body consisted of about seventy women and eight men. Therefore it "became necessary to compose 'for altos and sopranos'". (Hallelujah!! Note quote in the piece.)

A Non-Nuclear Canon: A canon being musical form as well as something that goes boom inspired this work from 1987. We are still working with altos and sopranos -- in this case as a three-part canon. It is, naturally, an anti-war piece with tongue firmly lodged in cheek. Note that the Hallelujah chorus also emboldens itself in this piece as well as "altos and sopranos".

– W. Jay Sydeman, February 2016

W. Jay Sydeman's life mirrors the breadth and variety of his music. Born in New York in 1928 and educated at Manhattan's Mannes School of Music, he quickly became one of the most sought-after and honored composers of his generation, receiving commissions from such prestigious groups as the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the Tanglewood Music Center, and the Boston Symphony, which premiered his orchestral work in memory of John F. Kennedy in 1966. "Sydeman uses a whole battery of far out techniques," wrote the New York Times, "but he has an uncanny ability to throw in the whole avant-garde machinery as if it were the simplest, most normal way of making music in the world ... More than many of his colleagues, he seems to know what will sound well, and he works for some remarkably attractive, pure textures. His sounds seem to grow from a physical sense of exactly what material is right."

In 1970, after a heady period that included awards from the National institute of Arts and Letters, the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Library of Congress, Sydeman left New York – and composition – to begin a journey of personal and artistic exploration.

"Around 1980," he has written, "I returned to composition – at first a large number of choral works which reconnected me to the source of all music – the human voice. Out of this new lyric impulse have evolved all of my works since that time – more romantic, more accessible. I create music for the musician."

– Howard Hersh,
Artistic Director of "Music Now"

Sydeman is part of a composers' group in Nevada City annually producing the "Wet Ink Festival of New Music." He now lives in Mendocino and hosts a bi-weekly program on KZYX, "The Mind of a Composer", 10 am to noon on Mondays, introducing and commenting on contemporary music.

Duration: Angels: circa 0:45
                       For Altos and Sopranos: circa 0:45
                       A Non-Nuclear Canon: circa 1:15

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For Altos and Sopranos

SA a cappella

W. Jay Sydeman
(c. 1986)
Text by the composer

Moderato ♩ = c. 74

mp rubato

Soprano: When men are scarce and we wish to sing,

Alto: When

mp rubato

Piano (for rehearsal only)

mp

Soprano: sing

Alto: it be-comes nec-es-sar-y nec-es-sar-y nec-es-sar-y to com-

Soprano: nec-es-sar-y nec-es-sar-y nec-es-sar-y to com-

p

Allegro ♩ = c. 110

pose _____ to com-pose _____ to com - pose for al - tos and so - pran-os a -

pose _____ to com-pose _____ pose for al - tos and so - pran-os a -

Tempo I ♩ = c. 75   *rit.*   *dim.*

lone _____ a - lone a - lone a - lone a - lone a - lone.

lone a - lone a - lone _____ lone a - lone a - lone.