

Seth Houston, choral composer

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Big Bay

for SATB chorus with percussion

words and music by

Seth Houston

1993

www.sethhouston.com

Notes

Big Bay, an environmental hymn inspired by the early New England shape-note singing tradition, is named for the town of Big Bay, Michigan. My great grandparents purchased a log cabin there in 1898, and the forest, mountains, lakes, and streams of that area have been a favorite family gathering place ever since. We still use the original log cabin, although several new wings have been added on over the years.

The shape-note singing tradition, popular in New England from 1780 to 1820 and in the southeastern United States since then, features sacred *a cappella* music with stark harmonies, rollicking counterpoint, fiery lyrics, and a hearty vocal sound. Many shape-note songs contain a “fuging section,” marked by imitative counterpoint. While *Big Bay* incorporates many of these features, early New England composers would probably be puzzled by its harmonic language, and perhaps by its message.

The piece should be sung heartily throughout, but with gravitas. The second verse and chorus (letters B and C) may be sung by a quartet. The percussion parts are just suggestions; feel free to experiment with different instruments and rhythms.

Big Bay was composed in Oberlin, Ohio, in January 1993. It was recorded by Village Harmony on their 1997 album *Endless Light: Spiritual Songs by a New Generation*.

About the Composer

Seth Houston is a composer, choral director, and performer currently living in Boulder, Colorado. Houston holds degrees in composition and religion from Oberlin College, and is working toward a master’s degree in choral conducting at the University of Colorado in Boulder. In 2001, he founded the youth chorus Big Sky, based in Brattleboro, Vermont. Houston currently directs the choral program at Shining Mountain Waldorf School in Boulder. Houston’s choral compositions are widely performed, and many of his earlier works are published by Northern Harmony Publishing Company.

Big Bay

TTBB arrangement

words and music by
Seth Houston, 1993

with conviction, ♩ = 84

Musical score for voices and piano. The score consists of four staves. The top two staves are for Soprano and Alto, and the bottom two are for Tenor and Bass. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is common time (C). The lyrics are: "Save me the air and the o-c-ean, Keep the mo-ther Earth a - live! Nour-ish the for - age".

with conviction, ♩ = 84

Percussion part of the score. It consists of three staves. The first staff is for Rain Stick (optional), the second for Cabasa, other shaker, or brushes on snare, and the third for Djembe, conga drum, or other large hand drum. The key signature is three sharps and the time signature is common time.

Musical score for voices and piano, second system. It consists of four staves. The top two staves are for Soprano and Alto, and the bottom two are for Tenor and Bass. The key signature is three sharps and the time signature is common time. The lyrics are: "and the for - est, Let sweet na - ture grow and thrive. We are the mas - ters of this pla - net, and the for - est, Let sweet na - ture grow and thrive.".

Percussion part of the score, second system. It consists of three staves. The first staff is for Rain Stick (optional), the second for Cabasa, other shaker, or brushes on snare, and the third for Djembe, conga drum, or other large hand drum. The key signature is three sharps and the time signature is common time.

11

8 Bound by our po-wer to keep it free. If we let our speech-less sis - ters die then so must

8 Bound by our po-wer to keep it free. If we let our speech-less sis - ters die then so must

If we let our speech-less sis - ters die then so must

If we let our speech-less sis - ters die then so must

11

11

11

16

8 we. Oh, I want a free and hap - py land (Save me the

8 we. Oh, I want a free and hap - py land (Save me the

we. Oh, I want a free and hap - py land (Save me the

we. (Save me the

16

16

16

20

air and the o - cean!) and let the whole world un - der-stand the mu - sic of the

20

20

20

24

sea. For the hu-man race to last through time (Stand strong a -

sea. For the hu - man race to last through time (Stand strong a -

sea. For the hu-man race to last through time (Stand strong a -

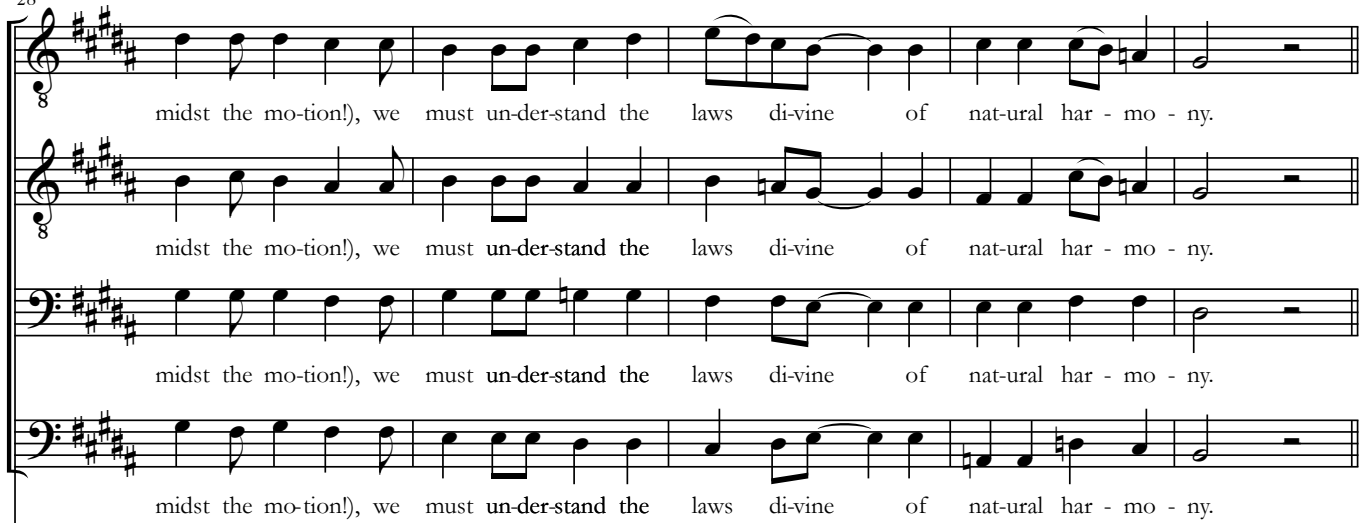
sea. (Stand strong a -

24

24

24

28



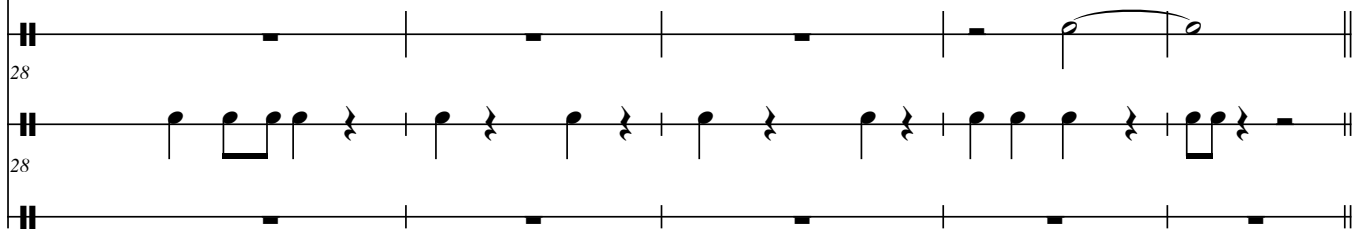
midst the mo-tion!), we must un-der-stand the laws di-vine of nat-ural har - mo - ny.

midst the mo-tion!), we must un-der-stand the laws di-vine of nat-ural har - mo - ny.

midst the mo-tion!), we must un-der-stand the laws di-vine of nat-ural har - mo - ny.

midst the mo-tion!), we must un-der-stand the laws di-vine of nat-ural har - mo - ny.


28



B

soli (opt.)

33



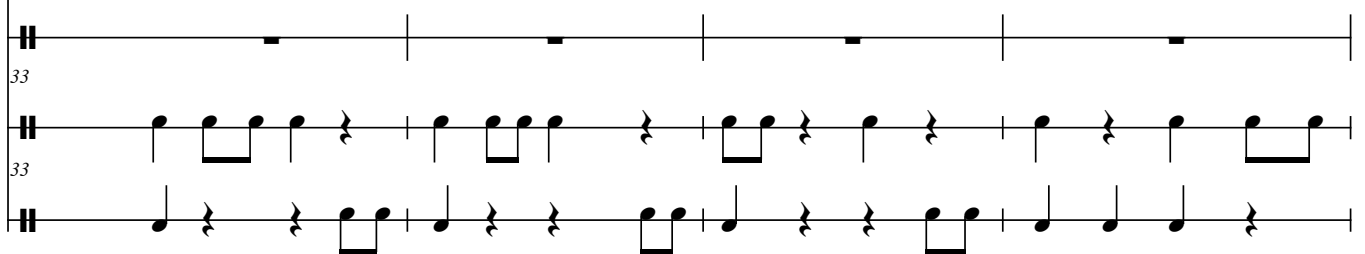
I want to live in a land of free-dom of spi-rit and speech and space and song, where com-

I want to live in a land of free-dom of spi-rit and speech and space and song, where com-

I want to live in a land of free-dom of spi-rit and speech and space and song, where com-

I want to live in a land of free-dom of spi-rit and speech and space and song, where com-

33



37

pass - ion tri-umphs o - ver vio - lence, where right is right and op - press-ion is wrong. I

pass - ion tri-umphs o - ver vio - lence, where right is right and op - press-ion is wrong. I

pass - ion tri-umphs o - ver vio - lence, where right is right and op - press-ion is wrong. I

pass - ion tri-umphs o - ver vio - lence, where right is right and op - press-ion is wrong. I

37

37

37

41

want my child-ren and their child-ren to drink clean wa-ter and breathe fresh air, and

want my child-ren and their child-ren to drink clean wa-ter and breathe fresh air, and

want my child-ren and their child-ren to drink clean wa-ter and breathe fresh air, and

want my child-ren and their child-ren to drink clean wa-ter and breathe fresh air, and

41

41

41

45

roam through wild and wel-com-ing for - ests in child - hood free and fair.

roam through wild and wel-com-ing for - ests in child - hood free and fair. Sing

roam through wild and wel-com-ing for - ests in child - hood free and fair.

roam through wild and wel-com-ing for - ests in child - hood free and fair.

45

C

49

Sing to the Earth a hap - py song (Save me the air and the o-cen!) the

to the Earth a hap - py song (Save me the air and the o-cen!) the

Sing to the Earth a hap-py song (Save me the air and the o-cen!) the

(Save me the air and the o-cen!) the

49

53

strug-gle is hard and the road is long, full of sor-row and de-light. Oh

strug-gle is hard and the road is long, full of sor-row and de-light. Oh

strug-gle is hard and the road is long, full of sor-row and de-light.

strug-gle is hard and the road is long, full of sor-row and de-light.

53

57

Oh sing for a fu-ture age (with rev'-rence and e-mo-tion!) let the

sing for a fu-ture age, a fu-ture age (with rev'-rence and e-mo-tion!) let the

Oh sing for a fu-ture age (with rev'-rence and e-mo-tion!) let the

(with rev'-rence and e-mo-tion!) let the

57

D *tutti*

61

8
west wind roar and the tu - mult rage in sil-ver - y light. We must work our

8
west wind roar and the tu - mult rage in sil-ver - y light. We must work our

west wind roar and the tu - mult rage in sil-ver - y light. We must work our

west wind roar and the tu - mult rage in sil-ver - y light. We must work our

61

61

61

66

8
lives to - geth-er to make this Earth a joy-ful place, sym - bi-o - tic for the fu - ture

8
lives to - geth-er to make this Earth a joy-ful place, sym - bi-o - tic for the fu - ture

lives to - geth-er to make this Earth a joy-ful place, sym - bi-o - tic for the fu - ture

lives to - geth-er to make this Earth a joy-ful place, sym - bi-o - tic for the fu - ture

66

66

66

71

ge - ne - ra - tions of the hu - man race. We are de - pen - dent on each o - ther to mold and mix our

ge - ne - ra - tions of the hu - man race. We are de - pen - dent on each o - ther to mold and mix our

ge - ne - ra - tions of the hu - man race. We are de - pen - dent on each o - ther to mold and mix our

ge - ne - ra - tions of the hu - man race. We are de - pen - dent on each o - ther to mold and mix our

71

71

71

76

minds and fate; child - ren of one li - mit - ed mo - ther, we must co - op - er - ate.

minds and fate; child - ren of one li - mit - ed mo - ther, we must co - op - er - ate. I

minds and fate; child - ren of one li - mit - ed mo - ther, we must co - op - er - ate.

minds and fate; child - ren of one li - mit - ed mo - ther, we must co - op - er - ate.

76

76

76

E

81

I love the Earth, I want her free (Save me the air and the o-ccean!) for
 love the Earth, I want to keep her free (Save me the air and the o-ccean!) for
 I love the Earth, I want her free (Save me the air and the o-ccean!) for
 (Save me the air and the o-ccean!) for

81

85

ge - ne - ra - tions af - ter me the ba - lance must en - dure.
 ge - ne - ra - tions af - ter me the ba - lance must en - dure. Keep the
 ge - ne - ra - tions af - ter me the ba - lance must en - dure.
 ge - ne - ra - tions af - ter me the ba - lance must en - dure.

85

89

Keep the forests green and oceans blue (in Earth's arms, embrace the notion) if you
 for - ests green and oceans blue (in Earth's arms, embrace the notion) if you

Keep the forests green and oceans blue (in Earth's arms, embrace the notion) if you
 (in Earth's arms, embrace the notion) if you

89

93

rit.

take care of her she'll take care of you, now and for - e - ver - more.
 take care of her she'll take care of you, now and for - e - ver - more.

take care of her she'll take care of you, now and for - e - ver - more.
 take care of her she'll take care of you, now and for - e - ver - more.

93

rit.