THE OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

for SSAATTBB and soloists 8 min

Melissa Dunphy



Composed for Volti Choral Arts Lab, 2013-2014

THE OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

"I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law; and that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God."

In 2008, just in time to register to vote for the presidential election, I raised my right hand and spoke these words at the USCIS office in Philadelphia after a five-year process of immigration from Australia. Only a minority of Americans ever experience becoming a citizen, and the ordeal brings most immigrants mixed feelings. I love this country so much, I have chosen to make it my home, but I still feel love for the country I left behind. I deeply admire the ideals that led to America's creation, although I don't always agree with the decisions and political direction of the government. I wanted the moment when my status as an American was made official to be joyous and inspiring, but the wording of the Oath of Allegiance reminded me that this country's history has at times been fraught and controversial, and becoming an American citizen was not a decision to be taken lightly or without some reflection on the nature of American patriotism. With this piece, I hope to confront audiences with the range of conflicting emotions I saw reflected on the faces of hundreds of fellow immigrants as we intoned these words in unison that day in 2008, and to encourage natural-born Americans to examine the immigrant experience and what we as a country ask of our newest citizens.

For further reading, I encourage you to see other countries' oaths and pledges of citizenship at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oath_of_citizenship

— Melissa Dunphy

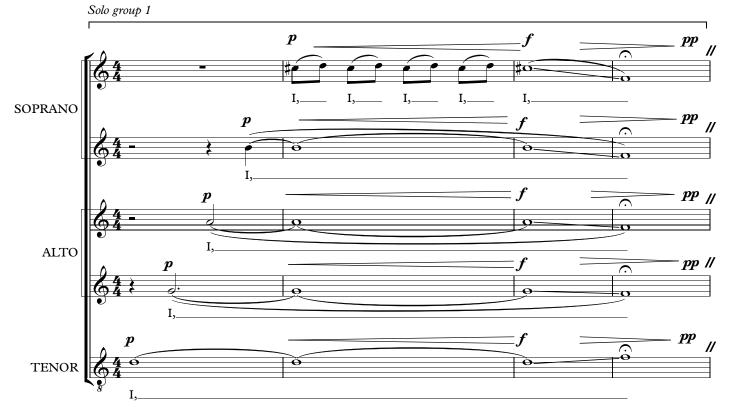
The Choral Arts Laboratory is an annual commissioning and residency program, begun in 2003, which is designed to give American composers under the age of 35 the opportunity to work with the professional singers of Volti during the compositional process. The composer is invited not only to create a work for the ensemble, but to develop the composition in a workshop setting. The composer is then given more time to work out issues discovered during rehearsal with the singers, as well as during consultations with Artistic Director Robert Geary and Volti's longtime Resident Composer, Mark Winges. This collaboration culminates in the world-premiere performances aiven by Bob Geary and Volti durina the reaular concert season.

Solo group 1: SSAAT Solo group 2: AATTB Solo group 3: SAATTB

olo group 2: AATTB

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Molto rubato, directly, deliberately





N.B. All metronome markings are approximate

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