A VISION UNFOLDING

KYLE PEDERSON

A Five-Movement Work for SATB Chorus, Piano, and Spoken Word, with opt. Violin, B^JTrumpet, and Snare Drum



Commissioning Choirs

Sponsoring Members

Festival Singers of Florida, directed by Dr. Kevin Fenton Tennessee Tech University, directed by Dr. Craig Zamer University of Dayton, directed by Dr. Steven Hankle

Participating Members

VocalEssence, directed by Dr. Philip Brunelle and Dr. G. Phillip Shoultz, III University of Mississippi, directed by Dr. Donald Trott Northwest Missouri State University, directed by Dr. Adam Zrust Florida State University, directed by Dr. Kevin Fenton

AVAILABLE EDITIONS

A Vision Unfolding, the complete work

Piano/Choral Score	1.3682
Instrumental Parts	1.3682A

Available individually

Reach Down, Lord	1.3683
Beat! Drums!	1.3684
All of Me	1.3685
Light Transforms the Darkness	1.3686
I Dream A World	1.3687

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FROM THE COMPOSER

A Vision Unfolding...

In 2021, seven choirs around the country commissioned me to write an extended work, centered broadly around themes of social justice. I didn't want to write a big work around these themes merely from my own perspective, so I reached out to Shanelle Gabriel, an African American poet, spoken word artist, singer/songwriter from NYC. Our conversations turned to "what sort of vision do we want to cast for the audience and the singers?"

We determined that, at the core, we hoped to re-articulate and explore what our country has stood for in its best moments. In our foundational texts and speeches, we find powerful declarations of a nation rooted in equality, freedom, justice, and inclusion. Shanelle and I wanted this whole work to be invitational—to be reminded of the compelling vision that we live into in our best moments, and to be invited to say "yes" to more of that.

It is my hope that we lean into the invitation that the choir offers—that each of us might reach out beyond our comfort zone and seek to build bridges of care and connection, finding a better way of being in community. That we might stand in solidarity with those whose voices are too often dismissed, regardless of their skin color, sexual orientation, faith background, or other characteristic. That we might not dismiss, disdain, and judge those whose politics are different from ours, but that we might make the uncomfortable effort to see them as people just as worthy of respect and dignity.

I'm grateful to Shanelle Gabriel, whose beautiful and challenging text is threaded throughout this work. You can read more about Shanelle and her work at ShanelleGabriel.com.

Special thanks to Kevin Fenton, who provided the initial vision and encouragement for this project, and who coordinated the consortium of choirs who commissioned this work.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

Piano underscore for the spoken word narrations is meant to be very rubato (with the exception of the underscore before *Beat! Drums!*). Optional repeats are included; aim to reach the last measure of the underscore just as the narration ends, allowing you to seamlessly transition to the next movement of the work.

Recordings of Shanelle Gabriel performing the spoken word elements are available at kylepederson.com. These can help guide and inspire your narrator(s) and provide possible approaches to cadence, rhythm, and rhyme.

You are welcome to craft your own spoken word between movements. You may find you wish to use Shanelle Gabriel's spoken word as inspiration or a jumping off point. Feel free to use existing poetry, fragments of speeches, original text created by your singers, or other means to thread the movements together and tell a compelling story that will resonate with you and your audience.

Audience participation: If you desire the audience to join their voices in singing, a good option is to invite them to join in the reprise of *Reach Down*, *Lord*, m. 13–16, page 45 (you may repeat those measures as many times as you'd like). You may also consider adding this element immediately following the conclusion of Movement IV: *Light Transforms the Darkness*. The pianist can play the accompaniment as written or choose to use the accompaniment found in m. 56–59 of *Reach Down*, *Lord*. The choir may sing the unison melody or the SATB harmony found in m. 56–59.

ABOUT EACH PIECE

Movement I: Reach Down, Lord

The poet is asking God's spirit to reach down and lift us up—lift us out of the pit, out of the darkness, and lift us to the light...lift us up to wholeness. In the spoken word that precedes this movement, Shanelle Gabriel does something important: the narrator asks not only *God* to reach down—but the narrator challenges the *listener* to reach down...to get into the mess with those who are hurting and to lift them up. So when the choir sings the refrain, *Reach Down, Lord*, we hear not only a cry to God, but also an invitation to all of us, to reach down—and out—to another.

Movement II: Beat! Drums!

This iconic Walt Whitman poem was written during the Civil War. It's an in-your-face text, exploring how ordinary daily life is impossible during war; everything is disrupted. Whitman is also rallying the listener—at the time his Union countrymen—to join the righteous fight to end slavery, and to preserve the union that was the United States. In the spoken word that precedes this movement, Shanelle sets this poem up beautifully by challenging us to rally around the cause of justice...to make our quest today for justice central to our lives...inviting us to think of this text not as a battle cry to fight *against* one another with weapons, but to fight *for each other*, giving all we have to make this vision of wholeness in community a reality. Musically, the beat of the drum, the blow of the bugle, along with meter and rhythm changes, highlight the incessancy of the Whitman text.

Movement III: All of Me

I think we all sense our communities becoming more fractured; we witness individual relationships fraying in our neighborhoods, schools, churches, places of work, and even our families. One of the root causes of this is, I believe, how quick we are to judge others—and hold others in contempt—for their politics, their religion, gender or sexual expression, skin color, class, education level, and a host of other characteristics. This piece is an invitation to lay down our judgments. It's also an invitation to see those aspects of identity that are important to people...but to see people around us as *more* than just a collection of isolated characteristics...to see *all* of them.

Movement IV: Light Transforms the Darkness

Shanelle's text is a call to action: to live our light and love out into the world—a world that desperately needs light and love. It seemed fitting that this piece includes a section where both spoken word and singing happen simultaneously, joining the two primary artistic expressions of the greater work and allowing all choir members to give voice to the sense of immediacy present in the spoken word.

Movement V: I Dream a World

The work concludes with the iconic Langston Hughes text. The choir and narrator have been casting a vision, and it's hard to state it better than Hughes; *I dream a world where none are scorned, where love will bless the earth and peace its paths adorn.* At the end of the movement, the listener will hear earlier melodies reprised as all voices are gradually layered in; and for the first time, all instruments sound together, building to a thunderous conclusion that invites us all to say, "yes...that's a vision I want to help make real."

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TEXTS

1. Reach Down, Lord

Reach down, Lord. Reach your justice down. When we walk on the broken road, Reach your justice down.

If we stumble into the pit And the dark is all we see, Reach below and lift us up; Reach your justice down.

Reach down, Lord. Reach your justice down. When we walk in the shadow of death, Reach your justice down.

-Robert Bode

2. Beat! Beat! Drums!

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!

Through the windows-through doors-burst like a ruthless force,

Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation,

Into the school where the scholar is studying,

Leave not the bridegroom quiet—no happiness must he have now with his bride,

Nor the peaceful farmers any peace, ploughing their field or gathering grain,

So fierce you whirr and pound you drumsso shrill you bugles blow.

Beat! beat! drums!-blow! bugles! blow!

Over the traffic of cities—over the rumble of wheels in the streets; Are beds prepared for sleepers at night in the houses?

no sleepers must sleep in those beds,

No bargainers' bargains by day—no brokers or speculators would they continue?

Would the talkers by talking? would the singers attempt to sing? Would the lawyers rise in the court to state their case before the judge?

Then rattle quicker, heavier drums-you bugles wilder blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!

Make no parley—stop for no expostulation,

Mind not the timid—mind not the weeper or prayer,

Mind not the old man beseeching the young man,

Let not the child's voice be heard, nor the mother's entreaties,

Make even the trestles to shake the dead where they lie awaiting the hearses,

So strong you thump O terrible drums—so loud you bugles blow.

3. All of Me

Look at my skin. Do you see only skin, or the soul within... do you see what's true?

Look who I love. Do you view me as less, like none of the rest of me matters to you?

Turn off the talk on the air, and the voices who seem to just care about dividing and hiding us where you won't see.

Look at my faith. Do you see my creed, and choose to believe that's all of me?

Look at my vote. On that alone are you likely to show contempt for me?

You don't have to see. But if you take the time to look at me, you'll see the same fears and a good heart, and the same tears that tear you apart. See the same love, the same hope, the same need, the same joy.

So look at my skin. See the skin and the soul within. See what's true.

Look who I love. And see my faith and my vote, but not those alone, seek to know me, too.

Turn up the voices of truth. Learn to let mercy through. Love will guide us to a world where we see. All of me.

Turn and see. Will you see? All of me.

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4. Light Transforms the Darkness

Light transforms the darkness, so go...go and let your light out. Love is what we harness, so go...go and live your love out. We are all unified by the way our heart beats What you feel, I feel Different palettes and hues and variety The Creator's tapestry We need to see the light Don't let the darkness hide our humanity

This is a calling.

We've been blinded by hate we were taught to believe That's not how it should be If my brother or sister is chained There's no way I can say I'm free We are the change we need So that equality can be reality

spoken word: Calling you to set your heart ablaze Raise the torch, pave the way So all can say I am free Calling for all to have the ability to dream To see ourselves in every being I want you to be free

For all to find home Wherever they may go Step into action, words no longer hollow We will fight for you to be free

Called to stand for all races, abilities, religions, identities No matter who you love You are worthy You deserve to be free

I will fight for you to be free This is our calling We are invited into each other's life We are called to live love Called to be that light

-Shanelle Gabriel

5. I Dream a World

I dream a world where one No other one will scorn, Where love will bless the earth And peace its paths adorn

I dream a world where all Will know sweet freedom's way, Where greed no longer saps the soul Nor avarice blights our day.

A world I dream where black or white, Whatever race you be, Will share the bounties of the earth And every one is free,

Where wretchedness will hang its head And joy, like a pearl, Attends the needs of all humankind— Of such I dream, my world!

-Langston Hughes

Prologue 1: spoken word

Take my hand Join me As we press forward Take My Hand As we move with unrelenting speed Towards a new world One that WE Breathed And forged Together A place where all Are welcomed A true community Take my hand Join me as we infuse freedom Weave compassion Embody the brilliance See this is what happens When we fashion A world centered in love This is not a walk in the park Nor for the faint of heart This is a journey All are invited to take part Where we reach down deep Reach down Past comfortable Reach down past what's superficial Reach down where past and present pain overflows Reach past the temporary To bring hope and healing that will endure We will reach back to pass the torch Each of us a spark But together a flame That roars Take my hand And then take another's For this is what you are called for To walk down this broken road To demand that every voice is heard To forge a world where justice is assured

~ Shanelle Gabriel

Catalog No. 1.3682

Dedicated to all who have the vision and courage to build bridges of care and connection

A Vision Unfolding

for SATB Chorus, Piano, and Spoken Word, with opt. Violin, Bb Trumpet, and Snare Drum

Kyle Pederson



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Prologue 2: spoken word

Shhhhh We begin with a reverent silence A stillness Only heartbeats echo This quiet calls us to interrupt it It is time Let's take a collective breath Lungs swell To tremor brass with breath Collect the wooden extension of hands To beat snares Each bang and clang An alarm to awaken us to The history of injustice To the oppression of today This collision of sound Awakening the sleepers Teachers Bargainers Preachers There is no place for pillows and prayers alone This is a battle cry A beacon for communities Transformation from passivity to activity Transition from dream to reality From unjust peace to one earned for all This war for justice is continuous With none of us untouched So all of us should be drawn to the fight All join in on this battle cry

~ Shanelle Gabriel



Transition from dream to reality... From unjust peace to one earned for all.



2. Beat! Drums! SATB and Piano, with opt. Trumpet and Snare Drum

Walt Whitman (1819-1892)



*Implode the "T" of *beat* throughout the piece.



*Omit when trumpet playing

































[reprise] Reach Down, Lord: spoken word

Beat...Beat... Blow...Blow... Through the windows Through doors Beat...Beat... Blow...Blow... There is no place for pillows and prayers alone We have opened our eyes And cannot return to slumber After hearing the cries of the oppressed and marginalized We have sounded the alarm Now we march forward Beat...Beat... Blow...Blow... We walk down this broken road Broken nations Broken patience We feel the need for reconstruction in our core It is time for us to march towards mending Bringing love and labor So what's broken can be transformed* Pressing forward Looking to the sky We say Reach down, Lord

~ Shanelle Gabriel

*The asterisk (added) in the poem above indicates the cue in the music beginning on the next page for the pianist to conclude the repeated measures 1-4, and continue on to the music beginning in measure 5.

[reprise] Reach Down, Lord: underscoring





Prologue 3: spoken word

Each of us... We are mirrors Who we are A reflection of how we treat each other Each word exchanged Echos our frame of mind Displays who we cut out Of humanity's portrait When you look at me What do you see? Do you see someone Who has a right to simply be Or a body Undeserving of the right To live freely? Our differences Should not threaten your identity Our sameness shouldn't Make me more worthy When you look in the mirror Please See me Mind and soul See me and see your own flesh and bone Regardless of skin tone Who and where I call home Party and political positions The possessions I hold See me for who I am and still listen Find me in your reflection And my right to thrive Worthy of your protection Because if you truly Love your neighbor as yourself You would recognize your divine Connection to everyone

~ Shanelle Gabriel



attacca



3. All of Me

*Play in absence of violin





*Approach this ornamentation gently, don't hammer.



















Prologue 4: spoken word

Your heart is open Now it's your time to shine Not for you to live in the spotlight But so that others can thrive This is a call That cannot be ignored This fight is within you This light cannot be diffused So illuminate through the hate Gleam while renewed by MLK's dream Let the marginalized be equalized Through love and action Go and transform this world Be the light we need

~ Shanelle Gabriel

Prologue 4: underscore



4. Light Transforms the Darkness

SATB and Piano, with opt. Trumpet and Snare Drum

Shanelle Gabriel

Shanelle Gabriel



* key signature indicates A-flat Dorian **implode the "T" of *light* throughout the piece



^{*}consider a soft "D" instead of a hard "T" in let



















*always bring out the spoken word until end of piece















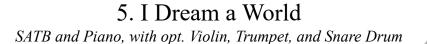
Prologue 5: spoken word

While this musical work may be finished Know that OUR work is nowhere complete In a world where oppression remains hidden behind tradition We refuse to allow prejudice to be justified by laws and religion No longer will we use differences As ammunition for division Because we know That passivity is the enemy of advancement We're on the path to equity We are part of the process Of breaking chains, Cycles rooted in pain, United under one aim: Freedom for ALL Embracing courage over comfort Using our privilege to be advocates No longer silent This spirit of activism Actively flows within us This is where we tap in Everyone, All in Each step Each act Each vote Each time we push back We reimagine and rebuild the world we know To one where love overflows We must persevere and believe That Justice for all can be made real You and I We Have the power to achieve what Langston Hughes once dreamed

~ Shanelle Gabriel

Prologue 5: *underscoring*





































* The Solo part may be performed by any voice type.

**If performing the entire work, *A Vision Unfolding*, sing the "Reach Down, Lord" text. If performing this movement as a stand-alone piece, sing the "Dream, I dream" text.

















