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Inside the Choir: A Personal Reflection on *Sunrise Mass* from within.

The concert I chose to write about was the choir concert I performed in as a part of the class. The performers were students at Bridgewater College, and the piano was played by the amazing Amy Robertson. There were two conductors for this performance. We performed four pieces, three of which were conducted by Professor Keebaugh, while the second piece was conducted by a student in the class, Charlie Hale. The concert took place in Carter on Nov. 17th and lasted about 45 minutes. The special purpose of this concert was that it served as the final for the course Concert Choir (MUS-441-01).

This was a choral/orchestral mass piece. There were four pieces performed; the entire work was called *Sunrise Mass* by Ola Gjeilo, and the choir performed "The Spheres," "Sunrise," "The City," and "Identity." The only instrument used was the piano, but there were multiple voice parts involved, including altos, tenors, basses, and sopranos. For me, what made the piece very interesting was the meaning of the songs. The pieces were in Latin, so the only parts I was familiar with at first were the sections where we sang "Amen." But there was a part we sang that went:

"Qui propter nos homines, et propter nostram salutem
descendit de caelis.

Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto

ex Maria Virgine,

et homo factus est."

Only the altos sang this part, and it was higher than we usually sing. I didn't know the meaning at first, but it always made me want to cry. My friend and I looked it up, and it translates along the lines of: "Who for us humans and for our salvation came down from heaven. And was incarnate by the Holy Spirit from the Virgin Mary and was made man." I fell in love with that part! Every time we sang it, I had to fight back goosebumps and stop myself from getting completely mesmerized by how we sounded as a group. I would like to say this specific piece had a warm, romantic quality to it, especially given the sacred text. The part I described above had a very intimate mood, gentle, glowing, and sacred.

The pitch range of this piece was moderate; I feel like the sopranos had more extreme pitch variation than we did. For the part I explained, we alternated between high and low pitches. I remember on the words "ex Maria" we had to sing very high, but still gently and warmly. It felt like peace, that's the best way I can describe it, very grounded and humble, almost as if we were singing to Mary herself. It wasn't super high where it was just impressive but low enough to understand the meaning behind it but the emphasis was strong. There were a lot of emotions being expressed. The beat was mostly legato, and I thought we had a calm tempo. When we sang the slow tempo parts, it felt a bit more serious. I felt myself getting tense and maybe standing straighter. I'm not sure how those were connected, but that's what I felt.

"Identity" started off with just the piano playing for the first 30 seconds or so, and it was beautiful! It started very soft and slowly grew louder until we joined in. It was one of the most beautiful things I have ever heard. The piano had so much story and depth. It felt like it was speaking, like the way a person's voice changes when they talk about something they're passionate about. At some point it even felt hurt, but gracefully so, like the kind of sadness you feel when you're grateful. This may sound strange, but it was communicating with the crowd, and Amy did a fantastic job. The tone of the entire piece was warm and bright in some parts.

The mode of the pieces was a mix of major and minor. The melody was simple and blended well with everything. I believe it had a combination of consonance with hints of dissonance.

I may be biased, but I truly think it was one of the best performances I have ever experienced, and knowing how much work went into it only made it better. Everyone was rhythmically together, and I appreciate this even more because I know how not-harmonized it was in the beginning, especially for me. Everyone was in tune, and it was clear that a lot of preparation went into it.

This was my first ever concert performance. When I showed up on the first day, I did not know how to read notes or the words for that matter, but your class helped me so much in preparing for both this choir performance and my piano class. I now understand that for a performer, being talented is not enough, there's so much that goes into it. I didn't realize how much teamwork is required to sing together. You have to follow each other, wait for each other, and trust each other. I will be joining the choir every chance I get from now on. And understand the meaning behind the vocals, dynamics and performance of others!