

## ***Shiloh (A Requiem) (2003)***

SATB a/c (or) SSA w/ piano

Difficulty rating: 3+

Duration: 3'30" to 4'00"

Premiere: SATB: [Pick-up ensemble], NYC, 2/24/05; SSA: New York Treble Singers, NYC, 02/05/06

*Shiloh (A Requiem)* was written in 2003 in an intense five days during the Oxford Summer Institutes at Lehigh University. The program was sponsored by Oxford University Press and featured The Princeton Singers, a marvelous professional ensemble led by Steven Sametz, who also chairs the choral Program at Lehigh. A dozen or so composers all wrote a new piece from scratch, under the guidance of Sametz and guest composer Bob Chilcott, with the Singers available for work-shopping. Add in an ample amount of singing and the whole experience was boot camp, no question. But it also had an important impact on me as a composer and musician, thanks in no small part to the talents and support of Chilcott, Sametz, then President of OUP Music/USA, Christopher Johnson, the Princeton Singers, and many of the composer participants I befriended, including Paul Carey and Reg Unterseher. I composed *Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal* at the following year's program.

The Tennessee field near the Methodist church called Shiloh was the site of one of the bloodiest battles of The Civil War. Herman Melville wrote ***Shiloh: A Requiem (April 1862)*** two years later. The poem begins and ends in the present-day natural world of birds, clouds and rain, while in between the poet time-travels back to the earlier carnage. My setting begins with a pictorial suggestion of the 'skimming swallows.' After the 'bullet' knocks the poet out of his reverie, the birds return in an aleatoric section, suggesting the flock has grown. The prevailing contrapuntal texture of the piece is relieved by the hymn-like sections describing the lonely church and the prayers of the dying. —*Jonathan David*

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(April, 1862.)

Skimming lightly, wheeling still,  
The swallows fly low  
Over the field in clouded days,  
The forest-field of Shiloh--  
Over the field where April rain  
Solaced the parched ones stretched in pain  
Through the pause of night  
That followed the Sunday fight  
Around the church of Shiloh--  
The church so lone, the log-built one,  
That echoed to many a parting groan  
And natural prayer  
Of dying foemen mingled there--  
Foemen at morn, but friends at eve--  
Fame or country least their care:  
(What like a bullet can undeceive!)  
But now they lie low,  
While over them the swallows skim,  
And all is hushed at Shiloh.

—*Herman Melville*