

A conductor's guide on Richard Burchard's *Falling Stars*

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Abstract

Richard Burchard is an American composer, educator, and music theorist. His work, *Falling Stars*, is a multi-movement piece for choir and orchestra with text by Rainer Maria Wilke. This report provides background information on Burchard, Rilke, and the work. It includes a practical conductor's guide for conductors including teaching and rehearsal considerations, conducting gesture suggestions, and detailed information about each movement. The resource is intended to be used as a companion to score study. Analysis for each movement is provided detailing phrasing considerations, form, text, ranges, instrumentation, time signatures, and tonal center.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Richard Burchard

Richard Burchard is an American composer and music educator with over 100 works to his credit. He taught for over thirty years with most of his career at the University of Kentucky. He taught subjects such as “Composition and Arranging, Music Technology, Music Theory, and World Music as well as courses in study abroad programs in Salzburg, Austria, and South Africa.”¹ In 2008, he was named as the commissioned composer of the Kentucky Music Educator Association, and has “served as composer-in-residence for several organizations, including The Louisville Vocal Project; Voces Novae, Louisville, KY; St. Martin of Tours Catholic Church, Louisville, KY; The Cathedral of the Assumption, Louisville KY; The American Cathedral in Paris, France; two years with The University of Kentucky Choral Department, Lexington, KY; and four years as Executive Composer-in-Residence at Bellarmine University in Louisville, KY.”²

He retired from academia in 2019 and is focused primarily on composition. Burchard resides in his hometown of Meadville, Pennsylvania. As of writing, Burchard is an active composer and travels premiering works. Currently, “Burchard’s portfolio includes over 100 commissioned works, most of them written for A Cappella Choir. He is published with the Fred Bock Publishing Group, Gentry Publications, H.T. Fitzsimons Co., National Music Publishers, and Pavane Publishing. Burchard also has two choral series with Gentry Publications: The Choral Music of Richard Burchard and The Richard Burchard Choral Series.”³ Included in the

¹ “The Music of Richard Burchard,” The Music of Richard Burchard, accessed September 7, 2020, <https://www.richardburchard.com>.

² “The Music of Richard Burchard.”

³ Ibid.

above list, Burchard has three major works to his credit “*The Seven Last Words of Christ*, an 8-movement work for choir and strings..., *Stabat Mater*, a 45-minute work for choir, strings, 3 trombones, clarinet, and percussion..., and, *Falling Stars*, a 6-movement work for choir, strings, piano, harp, and clarinet.”⁴ These works premiered at Carnegie Hall on April of 2018, American Cathedral in Paris, France on March 29, 2019, and Northwestern State University at Natchitoches, Louisiana on May 2, 2019, respectively.

He came from a musical family with his grandmother playing the piano and father singing and playing the saxophone. With his Catholic upbringing, he spent much of his childhood in church singing in the choir.⁵ Throughout his formative years, Burchard claims to have two main musical influences. “The first was his fourth-grade music teacher, Leona Schaffer, who started him on the saxophone in the band.”⁶ According to Burchard, his second influence was attending a small rural Catholic church called Saint Hippolyte which was the beginning of his interest in choral music. “The organist at the church ran a men’s and a mixed choir in the church. My dad sang in the choir. My uncles sang in the choir. My cousins sang in the choir...nobody thought any different. That’s what we do. Burchard sang soprano in the choirs at Saint Hippolyte as a young boy.”⁷ When Richard transferred schools to the University of Louisville, his love and admiration of polyphonic and Renaissance choral music grew. The year 1998 proved important for Burchard. He started his first Renaissance music ensemble and composed his first piece, *Miserere Mei*, for the funeral of Father Vernon Robertson. Richard goes on to explain that he is untrained in composition but spent much of his life in choral

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ William Floyd Plummer, “Selected Works of Richard Burchard: A Resource Guide,” n.d., 144.

⁶ Plummer, “Selected Works of Richard Burchard: A Resource Guide,” 2.

⁷ Plummer, “Selected Works of Richard Burchard: A Resource Guide,” 2.

ensembles and studied multiple scores of Arvo Pärt. While he does not share a similar style to Pärt, he appreciates and understands the spiritual roots and influences of the composer.⁸



Figure 1 Richard Burchard

The Music of Burchard

Burchard's music is modern in style yet highly influenced by Renaissance compositional practices. His compositions are complex in texture with polyphonic, linear writing throughout. Along with linear vocal lines, expansive harmonic structures are relatively diatonic. While many composers often develop the melodic and harmonic framework by using functional harmony outside of the key, he develops them by expanding chords beyond their triadic spelling. The music of Burchard has many harmonic extensions of 7ths, 9ths, 11ths, and 13ths⁹ which provide layers of complexity and variety to the score.¹⁰ The diatonic nature of the compositions is deceptively simple to read, but his use of extensions provides a challenge to tuning and balance of the ensemble. The individual vocal lines often follow stepwise voice leading. With much of

⁸ Plummer, "Selected Works of Richard Burchard: A Resource Guide," 6.

⁹ These indicate chords when stacked in root position have a either a 9th, 11th, or 13th above the bass.

¹⁰ Plummer, "Selected Works of Richard Burchard: A Resource Guide."

his music being rooted in Renaissance writing, many open and parallel fifths can be found throughout.

4. THE LEAVES ARE FALLING 3

The musical score is for a piece titled "4. THE LEAVES ARE FALLING" and is page 3 of a document. It features eight vocal parts: Soprano 1 (S1), Soprano 2 (S2), Alto 1 (A1), Alto 2 (A2), Tenor 1 (T1), Tenor 2 (T2), Bass 1 (B1), and Bass 2 (B2). The score begins at measure 10. S1 has a whole rest. S2, A1, A2, T1, T2, B1, and B2 all have lyrics: "up, far from up, fall - ing as if from far up, far from up, far from up, from far up, ling, as if far from up, - ing, as if far from up, - ing, as if far from up,". Dynamics include *f* (forte) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). T1 and T2 have a "soft do:" section with a "simile" instruction. A performance instruction states: "T1 and T2 stagger breathe to keep mm. 11 - 19 seamless".

Figure 2 “The Leaves are Falling” from *Falling Stars*

Figure 2 captures the writing style of Burchard. Polyphony and harmonic extensions are found bridging Renaissance and modern choral traditions. Open fifths are seen throughout, especially in the B2, B1, and T2 parts. To tune, the choir should sing with minimal vibrato. The fluctuation of pitch can hinder the overtones and allow for a less resonant sound. While minimal vibrato is

recommended, the teacher should ensure the chorister is singing healthily. The singer should avoid excess tension in the larynx by allowing increased breath flow. Other strategies for effective tuning include vowel unification, mixed vocal part formations, and across choir listening.¹¹ These strategies are not an exhaustive list.

4. THE LEAVES ARE FALLING

RAINER MARIA RILKE RICHARD BURCHARD

♩ = 62 *contemplative, serene*

Soprano 1

The leaves are fall - ing, are fall - ing, are fall -

Figure 3 Text Painting

He places great emphasis on the text and many of his pieces are filled with musical motives¹² that “paint” depictions of the text. In Figure 3, the soprano 1 line moves downward on the word ‘falling.’ These instances are found throughout his various works. Figure 2 shows the lower parts moving up by step on the word ‘up.’ As aforementioned, Burchard gathers inspiration from his spiritual upbringing. His text selections are often sacred, Latin texts stemming from the Catholic tradition.¹³ To better reflect the text, Burchard employs changes in time signatures. He states changing time signatures prevents “leaving anyone up to guessing was

¹¹ Gayle Walker, “Good Vibrations: Vibrato, Science, and the Choral Singer,” *The Choral Journal* 47, no. 6 (2006): 36–46.

¹² The smallest musical idea that can be a pattern of pitch, rhythm, or both.

¹³ Plummer, “Selected Works of Richard Burchard: A Resource Guide” 6.

it too long or too short or finding that it was too long or too short”¹⁴ when elongating certain words.

The musical score for 'Death' from *Falling Stars* is presented for five vocal parts: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor 1 (T1), Tenor 2 (T2), and Bass (B). The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 3/4. The lyrics are: 'bod - y's, this bod-y's fab - ric: as I in my spir - it burned, as I in my spir - it, my spir - it burned, see,'. The tempo is marked 'mf' (mezzo-forte). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Figure 4 - Mov. 2 “Death” from *Falling Stars*

Analysis

This report comprises three integral parts of the conducting process: an historical context, an analysis of the work, and pedagogical strategies for rehearsals. Chapter 2 shares an historical and textual analysis of the source material for *Falling Stars*. Chapter 3 provides an in-depth musical analysis of all six movements, and Chapter 4 serves as a guide for conductors with rehearsal considerations and practical applications for the choral rehearsal. Specific musical examples and formal analyses are provided throughout for your convenience. A full list of all examples is provided in the List of Figures and Tables on pgs. vi-vii.

¹⁴ Martin, Michael W. An interview with Richard Burchard. Personal, May 18, 2021.

Chapter 2 – *Falling Stars*

Background

Northwestern State University Chamber Choir and orchestra premiered *Falling Stars* in Natchitoches, Louisiana on May 2nd, 2019. Conductor Nicholaus Cummins commissioned the work for his choir and invited Burchard for clinics with the choir, master classes, and question and answer sessions. Burchard was present for the premiere performance. The work comprises of six movements with five being for choir and orchestra and one for solo voice and orchestra. The orchestration is harp; piano; violin I, II, and III; viola I and II; cello I and II; double bass; and B-flat clarinet. The choral voicing is SSAATTBB with occasional divisi. In the 4th movement, the choir is divided into ten parts.

4. THE LEAVES ARE FALLING 19

The musical score for the choir part of '4. THE LEAVES ARE FALLING' is presented for ten parts: S1, S2, A1, A2, T1, T2, B1, and B2. The score is divided into two systems, with the first system starting at measure 70. The lyrics 'fall - ing, Ooh' are written below the notes. Dynamic markings include *f* (forte), *mp* (mezzo-piano), and *p* (piano). The score is written in treble and bass clefs, with a key signature of one flat. The tempo is marked '70'.

Figure 5 Additional Divisi

Burchard designed the orchestration in *Falling Stars* to maximize accessibility for all performers while eliminating the need for a full symphonic orchestra. For example, Burchard’s inclusion of the harp and piano is intended to “fill in” the rest of the music and texture that a smaller orchestra is unable to produce.¹⁵

6 5. THE SWAN

47

Hp. *poco a poco cresc.*

Pno. *poco a poco cresc.*

S

A

T 1 *swan. And then our dy - ing re - leas - ing our - selves*

T 2

B

Vln. I *poco a poco cresc.*

Vln. II *poco a poco cresc.*

Vln. III *poco a poco cresc.*

Vla. I *poco a poco cresc.*

Vla. II *poco a poco cresc.*

Vc. I *poco a poco cresc.*

Vc. II *poco a poco cresc.*

D.B. *poco a poco cresc.*

Figure 6 Orchestral Example

¹⁵ Martin, “An interview with Richard Burchard.”

The piano also serves as the rhythmic driver, sometimes acting as percussion. The harp and piano have different melodic and rhythmic motives not found in the other parts. The piano and harp often double the strings to expand the sound of the orchestra.

2 3. WHAT SURVIVES

6

B♭ Cl.

Hp.

Mezzo

Who

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vln. III

Vla. I

Vla. II

Vc. I

Vc. II

D.B.

Figure 7 Orchestral Example (2)

Like many of Burchard's works, the music remains relatively diatonic throughout. In the interview, Burchard explains that his music only has chromatism when it seems to fit his musical goals. He goes on to explain that when composing, he limits his chromatism, as it can become distracting if overused. His goal is never to "show off" theoretical knowledge of harmony but to serve the text. As seen on Figure 8, the first accidental of *Falling Stars* does not appear until the final chord of movement 1. The accidental (E natural) functions as a Picardy third.¹⁶ The Picardy adds levity and prepares the ear for the next movement in E major. Since the first movement is in the key of E-flat major/C minor, having a C major chord at the end provides a chromatic mediant relationship with the opening E major chord of the second movement.

¹⁶ A major chord of the tonic that occurs at the final cadence of the movement/work in a minor or modal key.

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "Falling Stars". The score is written for a vocal ensemble (Soprano, Alto, Tenor 1, Tenor 2, Bass) and a string ensemble (Violins I, II, III, Violas I, II, Cellos I, II, Double Bass). The vocal parts have lyrics: "Do you re-mem-ber the fall-ing stars?". The music is in a key with two flats (B-flat major or D minor) and features a complex time signature change from 5/4 to 4/4. Dynamic markings include *mf* (mezzo-forte) for the vocalists and *mp* (mezzo-piano) for the strings. The string section includes triplets in the Violin III part. The score is marked with *rubato* and *mf* at the beginning of the vocal lines.

Figure 8 Chromaticism Example

Burchard recalls that the inspiration of *Falling Stars* began “when a very dear friend and former president of the University of Kentucky passed away.”¹⁷ Burchard states his friend was a lover of poetry and words, so he wanted to pick text that was meaningful.¹⁸ The texts are various

¹⁷ Martin, “An interview with Richard Burchard.”

¹⁸ Ibid.

Austro-Germanic poems by Rainer Maria Rilke. Each movement uses a different poem that is translated to English by various sources. Rilke plays an important role in the composer's life and is a favorite poet of his. In the interview, Burchard explains he has set at least 15 of Rilke's poems to music.

Rainer Maria Rilke

Rainer Maria Rilke was born in Prague¹⁹ in 1875 to a German-speaking family and died in 1926. Rilke started his education at the age of eleven at a boarding school but was eventually dismissed for health reasons. After getting dismissed, he received private tutoring with the goal of studying at Charles-Ferdinand University. Before enrolling and beginning his studies, Rilke published his first book of poems, *Leben und Lieder: Bilder und Tagebuchblätter (Life and Songs: Pictures and Journals)* in 1894. Rilke left the university after a short time and moved to Munich. He published plays and poem collections while there and was "introduced to the work of Danish writer Jens Peter Jacobsen, who was a decisive influence during Rilke's formative years."²⁰ The early writings of Rilke are romantic in style, but he is often classified as a modernist writer²¹. Romantic poets often deal with human emotions, while modernists focus on science and technology. Modernists typically place value on humanism where humanity is of highest importance.²² Traditional religious deities and divine beings are not of importance to

¹⁹ Prague was part of the Austria-Hungarian Empire in 1875.

²⁰ Foundation, Poetry. "Rainer Maria Rilke." Text/html. Poetry Foundation. Poetry Foundation, September 7, 2020. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/>. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/rainer-maria-rilke>.

²¹ "Rainer Maria Rilke - New World Encyclopedia." Accessed March 4, 2022. https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Rainer_Maria_Rilke.

²² June 28, Kristine Tucker-Updated and 2018. "What Is the Difference Between Modernism and Romanticism?" The Classroom | Empowering Students in Their College Journey. Accessed March 4, 2022. <https://www.theclassroom.com/difference-between-modernist-romanticism-8748756.html>.

modernists. In 1899, Rilke traveled to Russia, and his experiences changed his writing style and philosophy of life. He is “[w]idely recognized as one of the most lyrically intense German-language poets [...] Rainer Maria Rilke was unique in his efforts to expand the realm of poetry through new uses of syntax and imagery and in an aesthetic philosophy that rejected Christian precepts and strove to reconcile beauty and suffering, life and death.”²³ He writes of God, “however, he is not referring to the deity in the traditional sense, but rather uses the term to refer to the life force, or nature, or an all-embodying, pantheistic consciousness that is only slowly coming to realize its existence.”²⁴ Rilke began to think there was no greater being in the world than humankind, and “this, in turn, brought into question Rilke’s very reason for writing poetry: the search for deeper meaning in life through art.”²⁵



Figure 9 Rainer Maria Rilke²⁶

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Foundation, “Rainer Maria Rilke.”

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Heritage Images, *Rainer Maria Rilke In His Study*, photograph, *Getty Images*, accessed January 17, 2022, <https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/rainer-maria-rilke-in-his-study-circa-1905-private-news-photo/1155696071?adppopup=true>.

He was an innovative poet and expanded the discipline. His writings examine themes of death, love, spirituality, among others. Rilke is persistent in his attempt to understand the deep questions of life, specifically death and love. He was unique in the way these questions “must be solved at the cost of certain strangely moving contradictions.”²⁷ The poems and writings of Rilke are widely translated into English, and he remains the best-selling Austrian author as of writing.

²⁷ Wood, Frank. “Rainer Maria Rilke: Paradoxes.” *The Sewanee Review* 47, no. 4 (1939): 591.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Introduction

This chapter serves as a conductor's guide to Richard Burchard's *Falling Stars*.

Contained throughout are charts that organize the music by text, phrasing, tonality, and meter.

There are brief paragraphs explaining themes and unique attributes of each movement. Burchard designed this work to be performed as a multi-movement work that can be split into 6 stand-alone pieces. He uses frequently occurring meter changes to enhance the text and to indicate exact lengths of sustained notes that standard ritardando markings or fermatas do not convey.

The keys of each movement relate to keys of other movements.

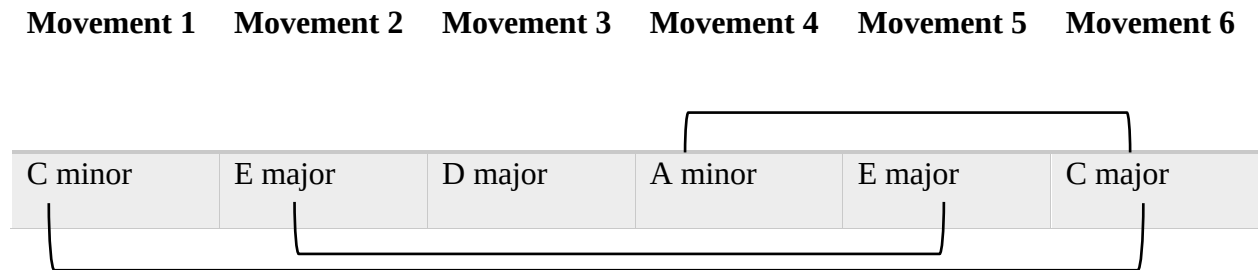


Figure 10 Key Relationships

Analysis

Movement 1: “The Falling Stars”

Vocal Divisi: SSATTB

S1 A1 T1 B1 S2 A2 T2 B2



Figure 11 - Movement 1 Ranges

Instrumentation: Harp; Piano; Violin I, II, III; Viola I, II; Cello I, II; Double Bass

Falling Stars opens with movement I, “The Falling Stars.” Like Renaissance polyphony, cadential points usually occur at the conclusion of text phrases. As stated in the interview, Richard Burchard is a lover of words and poetry. He composes the music in a way that serves the text. For example, the music opens with strings in their lower register, but (Example 1), but as the phrase “that like swift horses through the heavens raced and suddenly” occurs, the ranges extend, as if ascending to heaven (Example 2).

The musical score is for a vocal and instrumental ensemble. It consists of nine staves. The vocal parts are Tenor 1, Tenor 2, and Bass. The instrumental parts are Violin I, Violin II, Violin III, Viola I, Viola II, Cello I, Cello II, and Double Bass. The key signature is two flats (B-flat major), and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo/mood is marked *mp* (mezzo-piano). The lyrics for the vocal parts are: "Do you re - mem - ber still the fall - ing stars, that".

Vocal Parts:

- Tenor 1:** *mp* Do you re - mem - ber still the fall - ing stars, that
- Tenor 2:** *mp* Do you re - mem - ber still the fall - ing stars, that
- Bass:** (No lyrics shown)

Instrumental Parts:

- Violin I:** (No notes shown)
- Violin II:** (No notes shown)
- Violin III:** *mp* (Notes shown: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, Bb5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6, Bb6, C7, D7, E7, F7, G7, A7, Bb7, C8, D8, E8, F8, G8, A8, Bb8, C9, D9, E9, F9, G9, A9, Bb9, C10, D10, E10, F10, G10, A10, Bb10, C11, D11, E11, F11, G11, A11, Bb11, C12, D12, E12, F12, G12, A12, Bb12, C13, D13, E13, F13, G13, A13, Bb13, C14, D14, E14, F14, G14, A14, Bb14, C15, D15, E15, F15, G15, A15, Bb15, C16, D16, E16, F16, G16, A16, Bb16, C17, D17, E17, F17, G17, A17, Bb17, C18, D18, E18, F18, G18, A18, Bb18, C19, D19, E19, F19, G19, A19, Bb19, C20, D20, E20, F20, G20, A20, Bb20, C21, D21, E21, F21, G21, A21, Bb21, C22, D22, E22, F22, G22, A22, Bb22, C23, D23, E23, F23, G23, A23, Bb23, C24, D24, E24, F24, G24, A24, Bb24, C25, D25, E25, F25, G25, A25, Bb25, C26, D26, E26, F26, G26, A26, Bb26, C27, D27, E27, F27, G27, A27, Bb27, C28, D28, E28, F28, G28, A28, Bb28, C29, D29, E29, F29, G29, A29, Bb29, C30, D30, E30, F30, G30, A30, Bb30, C31, D31, E31, F31, G31, A31, Bb31, C32, D32, E32, F32, G32, A32, Bb32, C33, D33, E33, F33, G33, A33, Bb33, C34, D34, E34, F34, G34, A34, Bb34, C35, D35, E35, F35, G35, A35, Bb35, C36, D36, E36, F36, G36, A36, Bb36, C37, D37, E37, F37, G37, A37, Bb37, C38, D38, E38, F38, G38, A38, Bb38, C39, D39, E39, F39, G39, A39, Bb39, C40, D40, E40, F40, G40, A40, Bb40, C41, D41, E41, F41, G41, A41, Bb41, C42, D42, E42, F42, G42, A42, Bb42, C43, D43, E43, F43, G43, A43, Bb43, C44, D44, E44, F44, G44, A44, Bb44, C45, D45, E45, F45, G45, A45, Bb45, C46, D46, E46, F46, G46, A46, Bb46, C47, D47, E47, F47, G47, A47, Bb47, C48, D48, E48, F48, G48, A48, Bb48, C49, D49, E49, F49, G49, A49, Bb49, C50, D50, E50, F50, G50, A50, Bb50, C51, D51, E51, F51, G51, A51, Bb51, C52, D52, E52, F52, G52, A52, Bb52, C53, D53, E53, F53, G53, A53, Bb53, C54, D54, E54, F54, G54, A54, Bb54, C55, D55, E55, F55, G55, A55, Bb55, C56, D56, E56, F56, G56, A56, Bb56, C57, D57, E57, F57, G57, A57, Bb57, C58, D58, E58, F58, G58, A58, Bb58, C59, D59, E59, F59, G59, A59, Bb59, C60, 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E229, F229, G229, A229, Bb229, C230, D230, E230, F230, G230, A230, Bb230, C231, D231, E231, F231, G231, A231, Bb231, C232, D232, E232, F232, G232, A232, Bb232, C233, D233, E233, F233, G233, A233, Bb233, C234, D234, E234, F234, G234, A234, Bb234, C235, D235, E235, F235, G235, A235, Bb235, C236, D236, E236, F236, G236, A236, Bb236, C237, D237, E237, F237, G237, A237, Bb237, C238, D238, E238, F238, G238, A238, Bb238, C239, D239, E239, F239, G239, A239, Bb239, C240, D240, E240, F240, G240, A240, Bb240, C241, D241, E241, F241, G241, A241, Bb241, C242, D242, E242, F242, G242, A242, Bb242, C243, D243, E243, F243, G243, A243, Bb243, C244, D244, E244, F244, G244, A244, Bb244, C245, D245, E245, F245, G245, A245, Bb245, C246, D246, E246, F246, G246, A246, Bb246, C247, D247, E247, F247, G247, A247, Bb247, C248, D248, E248, F248, G248, A248, Bb248, C249, D249, E249, F249, G249, A249, Bb249, C250, D250, E250, F250, G250, A250, Bb250, C251, D251, E251, F251, G251, A251, Bb251, C252, D252, E252, F252, 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G345, A345, Bb345, C346, D346, E346, F346, G346, A346, Bb346, C347, D347, E347, F347, G347, A347, Bb347, C348, D348, E348, F348, G348, A348, Bb348, C349, D349, E349, F349, G349, A349, Bb349, C350, D350, E350, F350, G350, A350, Bb350, C351, D351, E351, F351, G351, A351, Bb351, C352, D352, E352, F352, G352, A352, Bb352, C353, D353, E353, F353, G353, A353, Bb353, C354, D354, E354, F354, G354, A354, Bb354, C355, D355, E355, F355, G355, A355, Bb355, C3

17

Hp.

Pno.

S

A

T 1

T 2

B

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vln. III

Vla. I

Vla. II

Vc. I

Vc. II

D.B.

like ———— swift hors - es through the heav - ens raced ———— and ————

that ———— like swift hors - es through the heav - ens raced ———— and

like ———— swift hors - es through the heav - - - ens raced ———— and

— that like swift hors - es through the heav - - - ens raced ———— and

that like ———— swift hors - es through the heav - - - - ens raced ———— and

Figure 13 - Movement 1 Example 2

Overall, the movement feels somber yet hopeful as the poetry asks “[d]o you remember still the falling stars?”. This somberness can be heard in the minor tonality and descending opening melody (shown in Figure 12). There is hopefulness as the music and poetry paint the scene of falling stars dancing across the sky. The climax occurs on measures 35-39. All the instruments and voices are in higher parts of their ranges, and a *forte crescendo* into *fortissimo* is indicated (Example 3).

Figure 14 - Movement 1 Example 3

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Text	Phrasing (measures)	Tonality	Meter
(Instrumental)	1 – 4	C Minor	4/4
Do you remember still the falling stars	4 – 8	C Minor	4/4
that like swift horses through the heavens raced?	8 – 12	C Minor	4/4
Do you remember still the falling stars that like swift horses through the heavens raced	12 – 20	C Minor	4/4
And suddenly	20 – 22	C Minor	4/4
(Instrumental)	23 – 24	C Minor	4/4, 6/4
Leaped across the hurdles of our wishes, of our wishes	25 – 28	C Minor	4/4
Do you recall?	29 – 32	C Minor	4/4
And we did make so many! For there were countless numbers of stars each time we looked above	32 – 39	C Minor	4/4
Each time we looked above	40 – 44	C Minor	4/4
We were astounded by the swiftness of their daring play	44 – 52	C Minor	4/4
While in our hearts we felt safe and secure.	52 – 55	C Minor	4/4
Watching these brilliant bodies disintegrate	56 – 60	C Minor	4/4
Knowing somehow, we had survived their fall.	60 – 67	C Minor	4/4
We had survived their fall.	68 – 72	C Minor	4/4
(Instrumental)	73 – 77	C Minor	4/4
Do you remember the falling stars?	78 – 84	C Minor	4/4, 5/4

Table 1 - Movement 1 Analysis

Movement 2: “Death”

Vocal Divisi: SSAATTBB

S1 A1 T1 B1
S2 A2 T2 B2

The musical score consists of four staves. The first staff is in treble clef and contains two measures, each with a quarter note on the G line (G5) and a whole note on the C line (C5). The second staff is also in treble clef and contains two measures, each with a quarter note on the G line (G5) and a whole note on the C line (C5). The third staff is in treble clef and contains two measures, each with a quarter note on the G line (G5) and a whole note on the C line (C5). The fourth staff is in bass clef and contains two measures, each with a quarter note on the G line (G2) and a whole note on the C line (C2). The score is divided into two systems by a vertical line.

Figure 15 - Movement 2 Ranges

Instrumentation: Harp; Piano; Violin I, II, III; Viola I, II; Cello I, II; Double Bass

Movement II titled “Death” uses a poem about longing, anger, and death. It is juxtaposed with themes of hopefulness and contentment. The quarter note triplet figure is used to stretch the word “unbearable”. This text painting elongates the word to emphasize the struggle the poet feels (Example 1).

S
bear - a-ble pain _____

A
bear - a-ble pain, un - bear-a - ble pain _____

T 1
bear - a-ble pain, un - bear-a - ble pain _____

T 2
bear - a-ble pain, un - bear-a - ble pain _____

B
bear - a-ble pain, un - bear-a - ble pain _____

Figure 16 - Movement 2 Example 1

“My gentle and mild being through thy ruthless fury turned into a raging hell that is not from here” occurs at the only modulation in Movement II (Example 2 & 3).

Figure 17 - Movement 2 Example 2

In this movement, the poet shifts focus to speaking of life and being outside. There is a half cadence that occurs at the climax and then a recapitulation of the opening measures. This adds a longing and incompleteness as if the poet knows he cannot stay there forever (Example 4). After repeating “O to be outside,” a long instrumental interlude occurs while the choir is in silent reflection. It feels as if the poet is basking in the sunshine, devoid of words. The choir enters singing “O to be outside” for the last time. This movement is unique in its expansiveness, gravity of text, and dense string orchestration. There is a fermata on the final chord that has a mediative quality after the choir’s final words.

77

Hp.

Pno.

S

A

T 1

T 2

B

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vln. III

Vla. I

Vla. II

Vc. I

Vc. II

D.B.

80

82

be out - side! Come thou, come thou last one,

f

Figure 19 Movement 2 Example 4

Text	Phrasing (measures)	Tonality	Meter
Come thou whom I recognize, unbearable pain	1 – 2	E Major	4/4
Come thou last one	2 – 4	E Major	4/4
Whom I	4 – 5	E Major	4/4
Whom I recognize	5 – 7	E Major	4/4
Whom I recognize unbearable pain	8 – 12	E Major	4/4
Throughout this body's fabric:	13 – 18	E Major	4/4, 3/4
as I in my spirit burned	18 – 21	E Major	4/4
as I in my spirit burned	21 – 26	E Major	4/4, 3/4, 5/4
see, I now burn in thee	27 – 28	E Major	4/4
The wood that long resisted the advancing flames which thou kept flaring	28 – 37	E Major	4/4 3/4
I now am nourishing and burn in thee. My gentle and mild being through thy ruthless fury turned into a raging hell that is not from here.	S – 38 – 41 42 – 51	E Major A Major	3/4, 4/4 3/4, 4/4
Quite pure, quite free of future planning, I mounted the tangled funeral pyre built for my suffering so sure of nothing more to buy for future needs	51 – 62	E Major	4/4, 3/4
While in my heart the stored reserves kept silent. Is it still I, who there, past all recognition burn?	63 – 71	E Major	3/4, 4/4
Memories I do not seize and bring inside. O life! O living! O to be outside!	71 – 78	E Major	3/4, 4/4
Come thou last one, O to be outside.	79 – 82	E Major	4/4, 3/4
O to be outside!	83 – 86	E Major	3/4, 4/4
(Instrumental)	87 – 91	E Major	3/4, 4/4

(Instrumental)	91 – 100	E Major	4/4, 3/4
O to be outside!	101 – 104	E Major	4/4
(Instrumental)	105 – 106	E Major	4/4

Table 2 - Movement 2 Analysis

Movement 3: “What Survives”

Mezzo-Soprano Solo

Solo Range



Figure 20 - Movement 3 Range

Instrumentation: B-flat Clarinet; Harp; Piano; Violin I, II, III; Viola I, II; Cello I, II; Double Bass

Movement III is unique in several ways. It is written for a mezzo-soprano soloist, the clarinet is introduced, and it uses an ostinato bass line. The example below has been reduced from the original score and played by the cello II and double bass (Example 1). This bass line serves as the phrasal foundation of this movement.



Figure 21 - Movement 3 Example 1

The mezzo-soprano solo often echoes the clarinet line. This adds a level of mystery as the mezzo sings “who says that all must vanish...?”. The vocalist often sings small pieces of text and their line flourishes above the instruments (Example 2).

59

B $\flat$ Cl.

Hp.

Mezzo

af - - - ter you,

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vln. III

Vla. I

Vla. II

Vc. I

Vc. II

D.B.

10

3. WHAT SURVIVES

40

B $\flat$ Cl.

Hp.

Mezzo

who _____ says that all _____ must van - ish who _____

Figure 22 - Movement 3 Example 2

The mysterious calm of this movement is enforced by the lack of piano. The B-flat clarinet adds a different timbre than has been previously explored. The aerophone instrument adds a reedy, sustaining sound not achieved on the other instruments.

Text	Phrasing (measures)	Tonality	Meter
(Instrumental)	1 – 9	D Major	4/4
Who says that all must vanish who knows	9 – 21	D Major	4/4
Perhaps the flight of the bird your wound remains, and perhaps flowers survive caress in us in their ground	21 – 33	D Major	4/4
(Instrumental)	33 – 45	D Major	4/4
Who says that all must vanish, who knows ²⁸			
It isn't the gesture that lasts. It dresses you in gold armor from breast to knees and the battle was so pure, an Angel wears it after you.	44 – 57	D Major	4/4
(Instrumental)	57 – 65	D Major	4/4
(Instrumental)	65 – 70	D Major	4/4
After you ²⁷			

Table 3 - Movement 3 Analysis

²⁸ The mezzo-soprano text is added in the instrumental phrasing as the solo line functions as a flourishing line over the instruments and not the driver of the phrasing.

Movement 4: “The Leaves Are Falling”

Vocal Divisi: SSSAATTBB

S1 A1 T1 B1

S2 A2 T2 B2



Figure 23 - Movement 4 Ranges

Movement 4 is the only one written for unaccompanied choir. The vocal texture varies with each introduction of new text. The sections open with homophony before expanding to polyphony (Example 1).

The musical score for Movement 4, Example 1, is presented in two systems. The first system begins at measure 23, and the second system begins at measure 50. The score includes parts for Soprano 1 (S1), Soprano 2 (S2), Alto 1 (A1), Alto 2 (A2), Tenor 1 (T1), Tenor 2 (T2), Baritone 1 (B1), and Baritone 2 (B2). Dynamics such as *mp*, *cresc.*, *mf*, and *decresc.* are indicated throughout. The lyrics for each part are as follows:

- S1:** And to - night the
- S2:** And to - night the
- A1:** And to - night the
- A2:** "no." And to - night the
- T1:** "no." And to - night the
- T2:** "no." And to - night the
- B1:** "no." And to - night the
- B2:** "no." And to - night the

In the second system (starting at measure 50), the lyrics are:

- S1:** fall - ing. And look at the oth - er one. It's in them
- S2:** fall - ing. And look at the oth - er one. It's in them
- A1:** fall - ing. It's in them
- A2:** fall - ing. fall - ing. It's in them
- T1:** fall - ing. fall - ing. It's in them
- T2:** fall - ing. fall - ing. It's in them
- B1:** fall - ing. fall - ing. It's in them
- B2:** fall - ing. fall - ing. It's in them

Figure 24 - Movement 4 Example 1

Text painting is used through the movement. It occurs with the baritones and basses singing “falling up.” Their lines move upwards in parallel 5ths reflecting the words (Example 2). He uses a downward moving vocal line in the trebles on the word “falling” (Example 3). A melodic figure occurs throughout the tenor line that feels like a leaf gently falling through the air (Example 4).

B 1
fall - ing up,

B 2
fall - ing up,

Figure 25 Movement 4 Example 2

17
S 1
in space. Each leaf falls

S 2
in space. fall - ing,

A 1
in space. fall - ing,

A 2
fall - ing, fall - ing,

15
S 1
were dy - ing, dy - ing high

S 2
were dy - ing fall - ing,

A 1
fall - ing, fall - ing,

A 2
simile
fall - ing,

Figure 26 Movement 4 Example 3



Figure 27 Movement 4 Example 4

This movement features large dynamic contrasts. Inherent beyond the limitations of *piano* to *forte*, the changes in texture and extended ranges require control as the singers navigate their full range. Minimal vibrato for tuning may be helpful due to cluster chords in the homophonic writing and expansive polyphonic writing. This movement has no chromatism, but its complexity comes from the polyphony and cluster chords. The influence of Renaissance polyphony is seen clearly in two distinct sections as each voice part has its own melodic interest. It provides additional complexity by ending in a cluster tone that ends in an F Major 7 chord (Example 5).

19

S 1 as if it were motion-ing "no,"

S 2 as if it were motion-ing "no,"

A 1 fall - ing, mo - tion-ing "no,"

A 2 as if it were motion-ing "no,"

T 1 motion-ing "no,"

T 2 motion-ing "no,"

B 1 fall - ing, mo - tion-ing "no,"

B 2 fall - ing, mo - tion-ing "no,"

Figure 28 Movement 4 Example 5

Text	Phrasing (Measures)	Tonality	Meter
The leaves are falling	1 – 8	A Minor	4/4
as if far from up,	8 – 12	A Minor	4/4
as if orchards, were dying, dying high in space	12 – 17	A Minor	4/4

Each leaf falls as if it were motioning “no.”	18 – 22	A Minor	4/4
“No.”	23 – 24	A Minor	4/4
And tonight, the heavy earth is falling away from all other stars	25 – 31	A Minor	4/4, 5/4
Away from all other stars	31 – 33	A Minor	4/4
In their loneliness	34 – 36	A Minor	4/4, 5/4
In their loneliness	36 – 38	A Minor	4/4
We’re all falling.	A2TB – 39 – 42 43 – 46 47 – 52	A Minor	4/4
We’re all falling.	A1 – 40 – 44 44 – 48 48 – 52	A Minor	4/4
We’re all falling.	S2 – 43 – 46	A Minor	4/4
This hand here is falling.	S1S2 – 46 – 50	A Minor	4/4
And look at the other one.	S1S2 – 50 – 53	A Minor	4/4
It’s in them all.	54 – 56	A Minor	4/4, 5/4
And yet there is Someone whose hands infinitely calm	56 – 62	A Minor	4/4
Holding up all this falling.	62 – 67	A Minor	4/4
Falling, this falling	67 – 71	A Minor	4/4
Falling	71 – 72	A Minor	4/4
Ooh	73 – 75	A Minor	4/4

Table 4 - Movement 4 Analysis

Movement 5: “The Swan”

Vocal Divisi: SATTB

S1 A1 T1 B1

S2 A2 T2 B2



Figure 29 - Movement 5 Ranges

Instrumentation: Harp; Piano; Violin I, II, III; Viola I, II; Cello I, II; Double Bass

This movement is centered around a tenor 1 line that carries the text. It is indicated to be sung by the tenor 1 section. Making a unified sound in the tenor line is paramount because they carry the melodic and textual interest throughout. When the full choir enters on measure 113, they are repeating text previously sung by the tenor 1s. The tenors rest during that section then resume singing as the choir sings “Ah” (Example 1). This is an additional example of Renaissance influences with the tenors carrying the cantus firmus of movement 5.



Figure 30 - Movement 5 Example 1

This movement is unique because it is the only movement in compound meter. The 3/8 meter at performance tempo reflects the mood of this movement. It is easily done in 1 and feels like the gentle paddling of a swan gliding on the water. The strong downbeat supports the image of the swan kicking the water with force but not splashing it in a haphazard motion. The harp and piano are doubled in a descending, cascading fashion that paints the picture of the swan lowering its head into the water and bringing it back up (Example 2).



Figure 31 - Movement 5 Example 2

Text	Phrasing (measures)	Tonality	Meter
(Instrumental)	1 – 2	E Major	4/4
(Instrumental)	3 – 4	E Major	4/4
(Instrumental)	5 – 6	E Major	4/4
(Instrumental)	7 – 9	E Major	4/4
(Instrumental)	9 – 12	E Major	4/4
(Instrumental)	12 – 16	E Major	4/4
(Instrumental)	16 – 20	E Major	4/4, 3/8
This laboring of ours with all that remains	20 – 30	E Major	3/8
As if still bound to it	31 – 40	E Major	3/8
undone is like the lumbering gate of the swan.	41 – 49	E Major	3/8
And then our dying releasing ourselves	49 – 56	E Major	3/8
from the very ground on which we stood is like the way he hesitantly lowers himself into the water.	57 – 76	E Major	3/8
It gently receives him and gladly yielding	77 – 84	E Major	3/8

flows back beneath him.	85 – 88	E Major	3/8
As wave follows wave, while he now wholly serene and sure	89 – 100	E Major	3/8
With regal composure allows himself to glide.	101 – 111	E Major	3/8
Like the way he hesitantly lowers himself into the water	SAT2B – 112 – 128	E Major	3/8
From the very ground on which we stood is like the way he hesitantly lowers himself into the water	T1 – 127 – 146	E Major	3/8
Ah	SAB – 129 – 146	E Major	3/8
It gently receives him and gladly yielding	T1 – 147 – 154	E Major	3/8
flows back beneath him.	155 – 160	E Major	3/8
(Instrumental)	161 – 170	E Major	3/8

Table 5 - Movement 5 Analysis

Movement 6: “Extinguish Thou My Eyes”

Vocal Divisi: SSAATTBB

S1 A1 T1 B1 S2 A2 T2 B2 Soli



Figure 32 - Movement 6 Ranges

Instrumentation: B-flat Clarinet; Harp; Piano; Violin I, II, III; Viola I, II; Cello I, II; Double Bass

Falling Stars concludes with movement 6 featuring all instruments and voices present. In the textual phrase “deprive my ears of sound” Burchard elongates the words “my” and “ears” (Example 1) indicating where he suggests the text stress. This phrase is unique because it is the last text the choir sings. He paints the deprivation of sound by having the voices end their phrase at different times (Example 2).

Figure 33 - Movement 6 Example 1

Figure 33 - Movement 6 Example 1

Figure 34 Movement 6 Example 2

Figure 34 Movement 6 Example 2

He brings back motives from previous movements. For example, in movement 4, the tenors sang a melodic motive that occurs again in the viola 1 and 2 parts (Example 3). The motive is a ribbon running through the two movements. The line feels like blood rushing through veins which is supported by the text “My brain will keep on beating and should Thy fire at least my brain consume the flowing of my blood will carry Thee.” The movement has an orchestral

interlude that leads to a choral polyphonic section featuring SATTB soloists. The choir's final phrase is a recapitulation of the opening of movement 6. Then the soprano 1 sings a neutral vowel doubled with the clarinet (Example 4).

Figure 35 shows a musical score for three parts: T 1, T 2, and Vla. I. T 1 and T 2 are vocal parts with lyrics 'do,' and 'simile' respectively. Vla. I is a cello part. The music features eighth-note patterns with slurs.

Figure 35 - Movement 6 Example 3

Figure 36 shows a musical score for four parts: Bb Cl., Hp., Pno., and S. The music includes measures 74 through 79. The Bb Cl. and S parts have lyrics 'mp' and 'mp' respectively. The Pno. part has a key signature change to D major at measure 79.

Figure 36 - Movement 6 Example 4

Text	Phrasing (measures)	Tonality	Meter
(Instrumental)	1 – 3	C Major	4/4
Extinguish Thou my eyes: I still can see Thee, deprive my ears of sound	4 – 8	C Major	4/4
Deprive my ears	8 – 10	C Major	4/4
Deprive my ears of sound.	10 – 14	C Major	4/4, 5/4
Extinguish Thou my eyes, I still can see Thee	14 – 18	C Major	4/4, 5/4
Deprive my ears	18 – 20	C Major	4/4, 5/4
Deprive my ears of sound.	20 – 25	C Major	4/4
(Instrumental)	26 – 29	C Major	4/4
I still can hear Thee and without feet I still can come to Thee, and without voice I still can call to Thee, severe my arms from me with all my heart as with a single hand, arrest my heart	30 – 44	C Major	4/4
My brain will keep on beating and should Thy fire at least my brain consume the flowing of my blood will carry Thee.	44 – 52	C Major	4/4
Extinguish Thou my eyes: I still can see Thee, deprive my ears of sound	52 – 56	C Major	4/4
Deprive my ears	56 – 58	C Major	4/4, 5/4
Deprive my ears of sound	58 – 63	C Major	4/4 , 5/4
(Instrumental)	64 – 68	C Major	4/4
(Instrumental)	69 – 77	C Major	4/4
(Instrumental)	77 – 86	C Major	4/4

Table 6 - Movement 6 Analysis

Chapter 4 – Rehearsal and Teaching Considerations

General Considerations

Personnel

Falling Stars requires a choir that can sing up to 10 parts. The work has a wide range with the basses singing E1 and sopranos singing A5. Each vocal line spans over an octave and typically has a high tessitura. The orchestration requires a piano, a harp, a clarinet, three violins, two violas, two cellos, and a double bass. At the time of writing, *Falling Stars* is not published.

Conducting Gesture

Richard Burchard's music features multiple meters per each movement. 5/4 is common throughout, so the conductor must decide on a 2 + 3 or 3 + 2. His text setting is clear as to which gesture should be used.

The image displays two columns of musical notation. The left column contains five staves, each with a 5/4 time signature and a 3/4 time signature. The lyrics 'spir - it burned, see,' are written below the notes. The right column contains five staves, each with a 5/4 time signature. The lyrics 'prive my' are written below the notes. The notation illustrates the 5/4 and 3/4 meters used in the music.

Figure 37 - 5/4 Gesture

This work has large dynamic contrasts, so the gesture should reflect the desired dynamics. The dynamics expand over many measures, so pacing of gesture size should be considered. *Falling Stars* utilizes frequent meter changes, often within one phrase, so preciseness of pattern is warranted. For example, movement 3 has a ten-measure section that has five meter changes.

The image shows a musical score for five voices: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor 1 (T1), Tenor 2 (T2), and Bass (B). The score is written in treble and bass clefs with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The lyrics are: "bod - y's fab - ric: as I in my spir - it burned, as I in my spir - it burned, see,". The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf* and *f*. The meter changes are indicated by the time signatures: 3/4, 4/4, 3/4, 5/4, and 3/4.

Figure 38 - Meter Change Gesture

Movement 5 is in 3/8 meter. Because of the tempo, the conductor can conduct in a 1 pattern or a 3. To better reflect the mood of the movement, a 1 pattern would give fluidity to the line, like a swan gliding on the river.

Tempo Considerations

The tempos center between $\text{♩} = 54\text{-}64$. At the time of writing, movements 3, 4, and 6 tempos were not provided. Based on the other movements and mood of the overall work, the above tempo ranges may be applied to these movements. The movements showcase large, sustained chords. Because of this, the tempo should not be slower as to drag the chords.

Performance Considerations

The work is designed to be performed fully, without an intermission. It lasts 35 – 45 minutes, so it could be programmed with other pieces. At the time of writing, Burchard is working to get *Falling Stars* published, it and remains unavailable for purchase. Performing this work currently needs composer permission and access to the manuscript.

Teaching Considerations

Falling Stars can be used to teach a variety of music elements, especially tone and timbre. Burchard's writing lends itself to an advanced level choir, but the educational opportunities within are endless. For example, students can explore the extremities of their range, musical expression, and vocal technique enhanced through warmups, vocalizations, and score study. With the text by Rilke, teachers can explore literary devices that are expanded by the musical composition. Because the work is full text painting, it allows the students to understand how the composer interpreted the poetry and how it may differ from their personal interpretations.

Sample Lesson Plan

Grade & Length of Class: Advanced High School Choir – 50 min.

Topic, Skill: Articulation and Phrasing

NAfME 2014 Standards (Ensemble): MU:Pr4.2.la, MU:Pr5.3.E.la

Objectives and Rationale:

The student will perform measures 11 – 24 of “The Leaves are Falling” from *Falling Stars* with phrasing based on text and marked articulation.

The student will analyze the music and decide their phrases using text, melodic contour, and harmonic structures as a guide.

The purpose of the lesson is to create individual musicianship using movement IV of *Falling Stars*. This section is polyphonic, so it gives the students freedom to decide their phrasing and be independent musicians and thinkers.

Warm-ups (5 - 7 minutes):

- 1) Stretching
- 2) Breathing Exercises
- 3) Singing a major scale on solfege
- 4) Singing a major scale in a round

Teaching and Learning Activities

1. The teacher will give a lecture on the general characteristics of Burchard's music. They will explain his use of text painting, polyphonic writing, and cluster chords to better reflect the poetry. (8 – 10 minutes)

2. The teacher will have the students get into sections and decide their phrases. They will decide the phrasing by using their knowledge of Burchard's compositional style. After discussing their phrasing, the students will sing through their part in sectionals. The teacher will work with each section to provide guidance as needed. (15 minutes)

3. The students will return to their designated spots and sing measures 11 – 24 with their determined phrases. After rehearsing the section, the teacher will provide feedback to the students' choices by offering positive reinforcements and constructive criticisms. (15 minutes)

Closure: The teacher will provide closing remarks on the work the students did. They will enforce the learning by explaining how the students' musical decisions enhanced the music. (2 – 3 minutes)

Assessment: Assessment will be informal, formative assessment using aural evaluation.

Assessment questions (yes/no):

- 1) Did the students perform their phrases as decided by the section?
- 2) Did the students utilize text to determine phrases?

- 3) Did the students show independent musicianship by singing their phrases with rhythmic and pitch accuracy?
- a. Majority correct pitches?
 - b. Majority correct rhythms?
 - c. Phrasing done as decided?

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Appendix A - Copyright and Interview Permission

Richard Burchard granted written permission to use excerpts from, *Falling Stars*, on May 15th, 2021. He agreed to a formal interview conducted on May 18th, 2021, at 2 pm CDT via Zoom.