

ILLUMINARE

Short program notes or media copy:

Illuminare is Elaine's first extended work, consisting of five-movements for SATB chorus and chamber orchestra. Using lesser-known sacred Latin texts, the piece takes us through a season of beauty and goodness that has been disrupted by darkness and confusion. But as Light gradually returns, hope is restored, illuminating our future and guiding us in peace.

Long program notes:

Illuminare is Elaine's first extended work, consisting of five movements for SATB chorus and chamber orchestra. Using lesser-known sacred Latin texts, the five sections create a narrative arc with common thematic material woven throughout.

With a majestic and bright opening in D major, *Illuminare* begins with a radiant flurry of 16th notes representing the entrance of Light. Then the voices enter in powerful unison, and the Ambrosian hymn text bursts into a punctuated and joyful "Gloriae" section. As the music turns to a softer legato passage, a portion of the peace theme is revealed in the cello—a theme that will emerge several times throughout the work. The music then returns to the joyful rhythmic momentum of the beginning.

The second movement features the women's voices and portrays a tender season of beauty. The elegant words of Hildegard von Bingen hearken back to an image of Eden—a time of goodness and purity. After a slow and gradual ascent to the word "paxis" (peace), a brief moment of the peace theme gracefully reappears in the cello, concluding with serene sustained tones.

Movement three takes a dramatic shift. Sensing an ominous shadow on the horizon, the choir sings the traditional Kyrie text (Lord have mercy). Then, a percussive B-minor blast of fury disrupts the world as the text turns to "Nox et tenebrae" (night and darkness). Accented rhythms and mixed meter further create chaos, confusion, and despair.

In movement four, the darkness begins to fade and the peace theme emerges once again, yet this time lingering in a minor mode. The shadows of the night clear away and the choir ascends to the word "Lux" (light). Yearning for the peace they

once knew, the singers plead a heartfelt prayer, culminating in a dramatic crescendo to “munera pacis” (grant us peace). Then, suddenly, the music becomes still and calm. The peace theme that has been whispered throughout the work is finally revealed to be the voice of Christ gently assuring us: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you.” The orchestra swells to affirm these comforting words, then concludes by echoing the beauty of movement two—now with a new hope of an even greater peace.

At the arrival of the final movement, joy is restored as the orchestra gradually returns to full force. Energetic rhythms support the soaring vocal lines as the choir sings from the prophecy in the Canticle of Zechariah: “illuminare his qui in tenebris” (illuminate those in darkness). Then a return to brilliant D major and rhythmic material from movement one blaze forth to declare: Light has triumphed to guide us toward a brighter future.



Elaine Hagenberg
MUSIC