

To the Supreme Being

Peter R. Hallock

1993

an anthem for men's voices,
oboe and organ

Text by Michelangelo
translated by William Wordsworth

IONIAN ARTS INC.

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Choral and Organ Score

CH-1038

TO THE SUPREME BEING

Commissioned by the American Guild of Organists,
the Yakima, Washington Chapter
on the occasion of their Regional Convention
June 15, 1993

In my long life as a composer of church music there have been two major turning points, moments in time in which the rejection of external directives were abandoned and a new and different direction undertaken. The first was the rejection of the academic approach to composition which evolved out of the 17th and 18th century German "school" where emphasis rests on what is allowed and what is not. The consequence of my self liberation from such external values resulted in *The Phoenix* (1975) for mixed choir, harp, 'cello, and organ.

In 1992 a second liberation took place: my rejection of the idea of God as a distant, paternalistic, anthropomorphic being as found in the Prayer of Humble Access (page 337 of the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*) ". . . we are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table . . ." While the church may choose to sustain and support such an image, I do not.

Thus it was a serendipitous event when I came across Michelangelo's *To The Supreme Being*, if only because the title suggested a different and more acceptable image of God—something other than a judging parent.

Apart from the title, two notable features of the text are "If Thou the spirit give by which we pray" and "do thou, then, breathe those thoughts into our minds". The one invites us to an awareness of our spiritual nature, the other to the life-giving breath of the Divine.

"There is something distinctly altruistic about the friendship of the Spirit. It operates outside the bounds of duty, function, or office. Of all our relationships, it is the most free, invoking neither the interdependence of the parent/mother (Creator) nor the mutuality of the lover (Eros) but offering instead a quality of presence and sustenance that allows and empowers the divine, evolutionary becoming. It evokes the friend who remains a friend for life, although actual face-to-face encounters may happen only rarely."¹

Finally, in writing *To The Supreme Being*, I longed to express an idea of God as might be experienced through the senses—an altered and heightened way of knowing bordering on the erotic—as in the ecstatic images contained in the *Song of Songs*, and reports of the blissful and beatific rapture of the mystics of ancient times. With such an aim in mind, the oboe seemed the obvious choice of instrument in light of its singular capacity to impart both the sensuous and poetic.

Peter R. Hallock

¹*Quantum Theology*, Diarmuid O'Murchu spiritual implications of the new physics, The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997.

To Charles Sherwood

TO THE SUPREME BEING

Text: Michaelangelo
translated by William Wordsworth, altered

music by **PETER R. HALLOCK**
June 15, 1993

Moderato ♩ = c. 52

Oboe

Voices

Organ

Freely.

Swell String celeste 8'

Pedal Swell to Pedal only

P

ritard.

In tempo

mf

5

3

f

3

5

8va-----

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17

mf

8 Thou the spir-it give by which we pray.

17

20

p

8 Our un- as-sis-ted hearts are bar-ren clay, Which of its na-tive

Our un- as-sis-ted hearts are bar-ren clay, Which of its na-tive self can

20

30

mf

Of good and pi - ous works Thou art the seed, Which

mf

This system contains the vocal line and piano accompaniment for measures 30-32. The vocal line is in treble clef with a soprano 's' marking. The piano accompaniment is in bass clef. The music is in 3/4 time and A major. The lyrics are: "Of good and pi - ous works Thou art the seed, Which". Dynamics include *mf* (mezzo-forte).

30

This system shows the piano accompaniment for measures 30-32. It consists of two staves: the right hand in treble clef and the left hand in bass clef. The music is in 3/4 time and A major. The accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand.

33

quick-ens on-ly when Thou say'st it may: Un -

f *f* *mp*

This system contains the vocal line and piano accompaniment for measures 33-35. The vocal line is in treble clef with a soprano 's' marking. The piano accompaniment is in bass clef. The music is in 4/4 time and A major. The lyrics are: "quick-ens on-ly when Thou say'st it may: Un -". Dynamics include *f* (forte) and *mp* (mezzo-piano).

33

This system shows the piano accompaniment for measures 33-35. It consists of two staves: the right hand in treble clef and the left hand in bass clef. The music is in 4/4 time and A major. The accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand. Dynamics include *f* (forte) and *p* (piano).