

# 80 CHORAL WORKS for SIGHT-SINGING

*A Collection of New Compositions  
for the Practice and Improvement  
of Choral Sight-Singing*

*by*

**Christopher Alexander**

**cantareworks**

THE MUSIC OF CHRISTOPHER ALEXANDER

## About the Arranger



Mr. Christopher Alexander is an award-winning composer and arranger from St. Joseph, Missouri. He received his Bachelor of Science in Vocal Music Education degree from Missouri Western State University in 2009. A self-taught pianist, his compositions and arrangements ranging from instrumental works to vocal solo and choral literature. Mr. Alexander has been commissioned numerous times by singing groups and church choirs within the northwest Missouri and northeast Kansas regions. He is also active in musical theatre productions as a music director and pianist. His works have been published with GIA Music Publications and Hal Leonard.

In 2016, he was awarded the St. Joseph Allied Arts Council Mayor's Award for Artist of the Year. In 2022, he was inducted into the New Generation Singers Hall of Fame.

Mr. Alexander currently serves as the pianist and primary arranger for The New Generation Singers, a Christian singing youth group based in St. Joseph, Missouri. He is a member of NAFME, ACDA, MCDA, and Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia Fraternity.

He is available for commissions and conducting events on request.

To find more vocal and instrumental works  
of Christopher Alexander, visit

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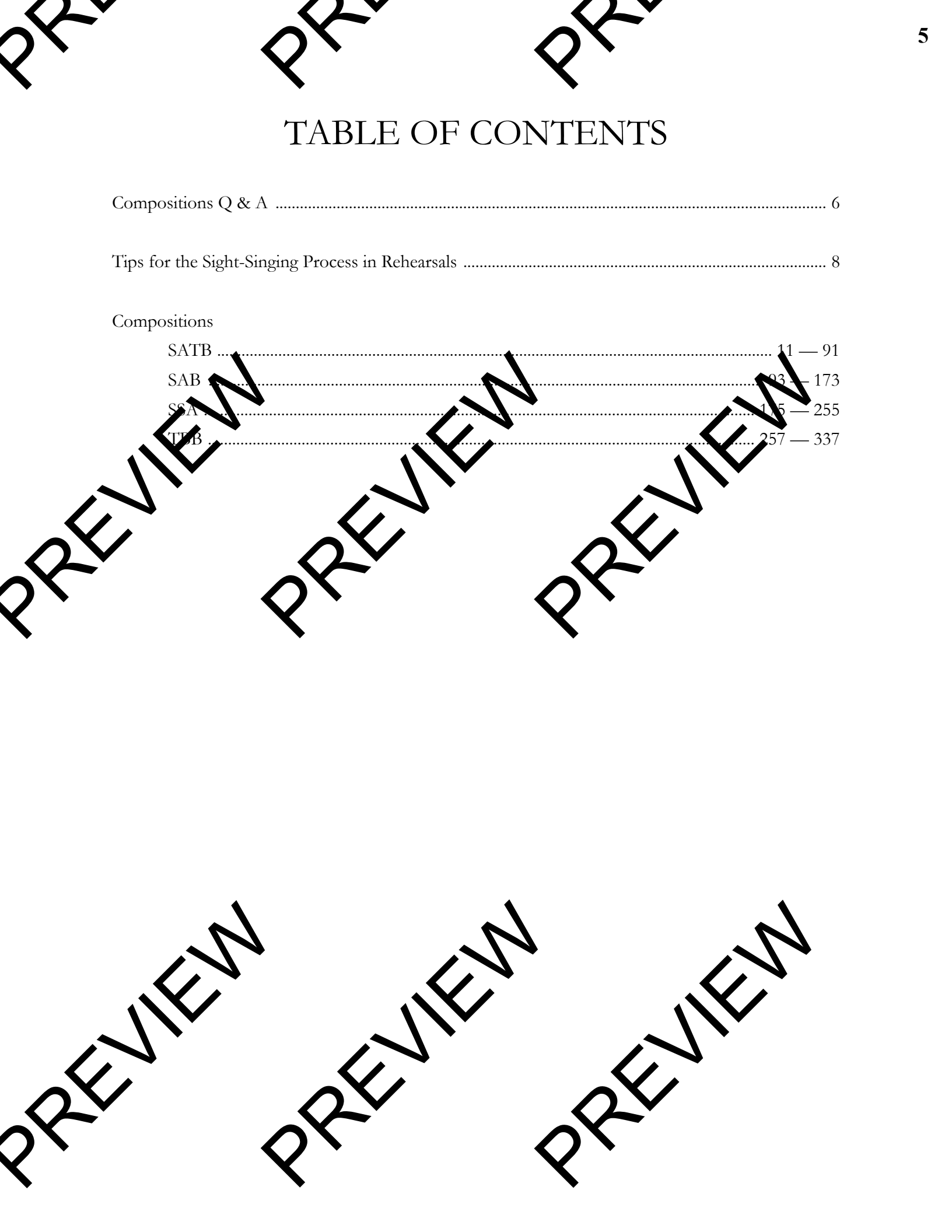
## Compositions

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# Compositions Q & A

*I must say that this collection is first foremost that, a collection of compositions for the purpose of choral sight-singing. I am, in no way, aiming to change the way sight-singing is done in your classroom. There are a few suggestions I give about rehearsal practice and preparation, but only if you are in desperate need of them or want to try something different. With that said, some clarifications about this collection are answered in the information below. Hopefully any and all questions can be asked, but if I missed one I believe you will still honor the collection and the work I have made to make this possible for you.*

## **Where did the text for each composition come from?**

Each composition utilizes an American or English language poem that (as of this publication in January 2024) were considered public domain under copyright law. Therefore, all of these texts are permissible to use for this collection. If any of these poems resonate with you or your students, that is a plus to me.

## **Can I photocopy and make duplicate copies of these songs?**

Yes. In fact, it is highly encouraged so each of your students has a copy of their own to read from in rehearsal.

## **Can I perform these songs at our next concert?**

It wasn't my intention to have these performed in concert - this is noted at the bottom of the first page of each composition. However, if you feel so moved to have your choir perform this song you are more than welcome to do so. (Please send me an audio and/or video recording if you do.)

## **How difficult are these songs to sing?**

These songs are meant to be accessible to all choirs who rehearse/perform in at least 3-part voicings. The notes are situated within acceptable ranges for each respective voice part. A homophonic texture is used for each song, utilizing authentic and plagal cadences.

## **What time signatures are used?**

Only the simple meters of 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4. Only simple rhythms and values are used, using note values spanning from eighths to whole notes.

## **What key signatures are used?**

The major keys of C, G, D, F, B-flat, and E-flat. There are no accidentals or modulations.

## **How long is each song?**

32 measures long, spanning to cover 4 pages per song. Some songs include an anacrusis measure, but do not change the consistent number of measures between songs.

## **What articulations are used?**

The only articulation used in this collection is the fermata. Other articulations such as accents, staccatos, and glissandos among others that would modify the vocal performance of the work were not used for the purpose to focus mainly on the pitches, rhythms, and poetic text on which every vocalist can be more easily evaluated.

### What phrasing should I use for each song?

All of the songs typically have 4-measure phrases. Plan breaths accordingly.

### How fast should the choir sight-sing through a song?

Each song is given a tempo of quarter note equals 72 bpm. However, in practice, you will realize with your choir if a slower or faster pace is needed to make them create successful results. Each song lasts between 1-2 minutes.

### What if I don't have enough Soprano II's or Baritones for the SSA and TBB songs?

If you need more people for the inner voice of these ensembles, take a few singers from each of the other sections and combine them. You will know each of your singers' voices well enough to make the judgement of which singer will be able to handle moving to a higher/lower voice part, as long as the personnel in the outer sections are not affected in their performance. For TBB, if some Tenors are switched to the Baritone line this gives them the opportunity to read from the bass clef.

### What harmonic structures are used?

Harmonies for each song are traditionally built around the I, IV, and V chords of their respective key. This is accomplished with easy voice-leading, using step-wise and harmonic intervals. Crossing of voices is not represented, though at times 2 or more voices may share the same unison note.

### What dynamics are used?

The dynamics used are: piano, mezzo-piano, mezzo-forte, and/or forte. It is best in performance to make these dynamic differences very apparent as to infer a noticeable volume change.

*One final note...*

There are 20 compositions written for each voicing, with no songs using the same poetic text or vocal lines (intentionally) between them. If you were to practice 1 song per school day, that would equate to a month's worth of sight-singing compositions. It is not the easiest nor the most comfortable aspect of music, but in my opinion is one of the most necessary. Students will moan and groan about having to sight-sing if it is viewed as a punishment or time-waster. It should be seen as an opportunity to grow a student's fundamental musicianship that will make learning music easier in the long run. As a director it is your discretion how much time you wish to give in rehearsals dedicated to sight-singing, but the best idea comes with many things in music and in life: if you want to get better in something...*practice, practice, practice.*

# Tips for the Sight-Singing Process in Rehearsals

*These are merely suggestions to help you and your choir become more comfortable with sight-singing. I do find having a process alleviates some inherent pressures that come with sight-singing. If you already have a process that works with your choirs, keep that going. But if you're looking for new ways to enhance the sight-singing experience for you and your singers, try these tips at your next rehearsal. Some of these are rules and regulations with sight-singing evaluations at state choral festivals.*

## **Separate all voice sections from each other, with space between sections.**

Use the entire space of your rehearsal area to distinctly visualize each voice part, as long as the director can easily manage and visually communicate with them. You may want to keep all sections close to the director's stand for your conducting benefit. In SATB choruses, intertwine the sections to create more possible distance between ranges (i.e. S—B—A—T, A—T—S—B, etc.). For 3-part music, place the lowest voice in the middle between the upper voices (SI—A—SII and T—Bs—Br).

## **Place 1-2 stronger sight-singers for each section on the side closest to the director.**

These students will help the rest of the section stay on the correct notes during each reading. They should use Curwen hand signs in both readings as a visual guide for their section. If you have more strong leaders (vocally or in using solfege), intersperse them among the other students in the section so that everybody can hear a stronger voice around them and thus sing with more confidence.

## **When handing out copies of the song to each student, make sure it is kept title page down.**

Some eager students will want to look ahead and get an early start to figure out how the song goes before the rest of the ensemble. All students should start at the same time when it comes to choral sight-singing evaluations, beginning at the discretion of the director.

## **Teachers should keep their instruction time to a maximum of 4 minutes, and the choir should read the piece twice.**

The teacher instruction time can be split before reading, but should not exceed 4 minutes in total (divide such as 1/3, 2/2, or 3/1). Use this time to relate the key and time signatures, each part's starting and ending solfege syllables, and anything else necessary relating to the piece that needs to be said. No singing should be done during instruction time, only listening to the director. However, you can have the choir chant (monotone) in rhythm altogether the solfege of their vocal line - be mindful that any changes in vocal inflection can be considered "singing" by most festival evaluators.

## **After the designated instruction time is ended, take 30 seconds maximum to have the singers sing the scale of the song's major key and any other harmonic chord drills to find their respective first note.**

This is usually allowed by most festivals, so be sure to check your festival rules and regulations first before utilizing this step. By singing through the scale, this allows the choir to firmly establish the key signature and where to start. After that, it is up to them finding their way to reach the end together and make the song sound as much like a performance piece as possible. Festival evaluators may hear this song so many times in one day, but they always remember who made it sound fantastic (and also which choirs most certainly did not, but I'll keep it positive here).



**Have the students sing the first time on solfege and the second time using the poetic lyrics.**

The director should not make any audible noise during each reading. To aid the students with a visual and physical representation of singing with solfege in the first reading, have them use Curwen hand signs for the notes in their respective voice part. The director will notice simultaneous Curwen hand signs between sections, so be sure to take note if these are correct with the music and the harmonies are lined up. If a voice section gets off-track during either reading, direct the correct Curwen hand signs toward them (in rhythm with the song's tempo) in the effort to help them make the adjustment. Festival evaluators are always keen to find these moments happen, and when the correct adjustment is made they get happier.

**Count off (in tempo) one measure before the choir sings.** This allows the entire choir to sing their first notes with a little more confidence knowing when they should come in. It also helps to say this in the same first dynamic of the piece. Directors should remember that after this count-off they should not verbalize anything or make any audible noises that can assist their choir.

**Give your student leaders the opportunity to help others.** Instruction time can offer the opportunity for student leaders to communicate with their section about which notes and/or rhythms to watch for. Page turns can also be troublesome if they find trouble with them.

**Look for difficult words to pronounce.** All of the poetry is used in the English language, but there are some words that are not often used today that may be difficult to say. With choral students reading notes and rhythms on the page, words should not be a hindrance to them. The second instructional time should deal with any difficult words, relaying to your students how you would like them to be pronounced – it doesn't matter if people disagree as long as everybody performs it together using your instruction.

*One final note...*

Whatever your process may be for sight-singing in your classroom rehearsal, if it works to your satisfaction keep it. These tips are based on most state choral festivals where an overall rating or evaluation is given to choirs that perform at least two concert-appropriate works and participate in a round of sight-singing a new work verified by the state music board. As the director, you know how your students react even to the mere mention of sight-singing and their success rate with it. If your process matches that of the state's festival sight-singing process, which these tips and suggestions also follow, and keep it going consistently in your rehearsal preparations, your students will feel more comfortable reading music cold. Sight-singing may not be preferable by most musicians, but without it we lose a large portion of our musical potential. It is a slow and sometimes agonizing ordeal to keep going through the process, but over time students can manage their viewpoint of sight-singing to be more welcoming and not frightening to do.

All it takes is *practice, practice, practice.*

## SATB

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# Crossing the Bar

Words by  
ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Music by  
CHRISTOPHER ALEXANDER

(♩ = 72)  
*mf*

SOPRANO  
Sun - set and eve - ning star, And one clear call for me! And

ALTO  
Sun - set and eve - ning star, And one clear call for me! And

TENOR  
Sun - set and eve - ning star, And one clear call for me! And

BASS  
Sun - set and eve - ning star, And one clear call for me! And

PIANO  
(for rehearsal only)  
*mf*

5 6 7 8 *f*

SOP.  
may there be no moan - ing of the bar, When I put out to sea, But

ALTO  
may there be no moan - ing of the bar, When I put out to sea, But

TEN.  
may there be no moan - ing of the bar, When I put out to sea, But

BASS  
may there be no moan - ing of the bar, When I put out to sea, But

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# All Lovely Things

Words by  
CONRAD POTTER AIKEN

Music by  
CHRISTOPHER ALEXANDER

(♩ = 72)  
*mp*

SOPRANO  
All love-ly things will have an end - ing, All love-ly things will fade and die, And

ALTO  
All love-ly things will have an end - ing, All love-ly things will fade and die, And

BARITONE  
All love-ly things will have an end - ing, All love-ly things will fade and die, And

PIANO  
(for rehearsal only)  
*mp*

5 6 7 8

SOP.  
youth, that's now so brave - ly spend - ing, Will beg a pen - ny by and by.

ALTO  
youth, that's now so brave - ly spend - ing, Will beg a pen - ny by and by.

BAR.  
youth, that's now so brave - ly spend - ing, Will beg a pen - ny by and by.

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## SSA

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# All On a Golden Summer Day

Words by  
ARTHUR MACY

Music by  
CHRISTOPHER ALEXANDER

(♩ = 72)  
*mf*

SOPRANO I  
All on a gold - en sum - mer day, As through the leaves a sin - gle ray Of

SOPRANO II  
All on a gold - en sum - mer day, As through the leaves a sin - gle ray Of

ALTO  
All on a gold - en sum - mer day, As through the leaves a sin - gle ray Of

PIANO  
(for rehearsal only)  
*mf*

5 6 7 *f* 8

SOP. I  
yel - low sun - shine finds its way So bright; so bright; The

SOP. II  
yel - low sun - shine finds its way So bright; so bright; The

ALTO  
yel - low sun - shine finds its way So bright; so bright; The

PIANO  
5 6 7 8  
*f*

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# Better and Best

Words by  
JOHN OXENHAM

Music by  
CHRISTOPHER ALEXANDER

(♩ = 72)  
*mf*

TENOR

8

BETTER in BIT-ter-est a-go-ny to lie, Be-fore Thy throne, Than through

2 3 4

BARITONE

*mf*

8

BET-ter in bit-ter-est a-go-ny to lie, Be-fore Thy throne, Than through

2 3 4

BASS

*mf*

8

Bet-ter in bit-ter-est a-go-ny to lie, Be-fore Thy throne, Than through

2 3 4

PIANO  
(for rehearsal only)

(♩ = 72)  
*mf*

8

TEN.

5

much in-crease to be lift-ed up on high, And stand a-lone.

6 7 8

BAR.

5

much in-crease to be lift-ed up on high, And stand a-lone.

6 7 8

BASS

5

much in-crease to be lift-ed up on high, And stand a-lone.

6 7 8

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