

405-633

Spirit, Moving Over Chaos
Chorus, oboe or C inst., percussion, opt. handbells, kybd.

Clark/White



Spirit, Moving Over Chaos

Text by

Patricia Blaze Clark

Music by

David Ashley White

Spirit, Moving Over Chaos

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David Ashley White's secular and sacred compositions are widely performed and published. He has received numerous commissions throughout his career, including most recently from the Association of Anglican Musicians, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Galveston/Houston, and the Royal School of Church Music in America. Since 1980, ASCAP has recognized him with an annual award for his activities in composition.

In spring 2007, Gothic label released White's *Praise the Spirit*. This recording, sung by the Palmer Choir, Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church, Houston, Courtney Daniell Knapp and Brady Knapp, co-directors, contains more of White's anthems, motets, service music, and hymns. Scott Cantrell, writing in the *Dallas Morning News*, described White as having a "natural feel for vocal line, but also a keen ear for glowing harmonies." Lindsay Koob, in *The American Record Guide*, wrote, "His music reveals a distinctly Anglican ring and spirit, yet its Yankee heritage shines through as well."

White was composer-in-residence at the Mississippi Conference on Music and Liturgy in 1991, 1995, 2003, and 2012, and in 1998 he was composer-in-residence at the Evergreen Church Music Conference in Colorado. He was the 1993 winner of the composition contest sponsored by St. Paul United Church of Christ in Chicago for his festival anthem *Cantate Domino*, published by Paraclete Press. Other first prizes have come from the Virginia Bandmasters Association, the Texas Federation of Music Clubs, and the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama.

In addition to the extensive publication of White's choral and instrumental music, his hymns are readily available through a number of sources: the Episcopal Church's *The Hymnal 1982* and *Wonder, Love, and Praise*; *The United Methodist Hymnal* and its supplement; the hymnal of the United Church of Christ in Japan; Great Britain's *Worship Songs Ancient and Modern*; and *Hymns of Universal Praise*, published by the Chinese Christian Literature Council LTD, among others. Three collections of his hymns are published by Selah Publishing Co., Pittsburgh, Pa.: *Sing, My Soul: The Hymns of David Ashley White* (1996), *Songs for a New Creation* (2002), and *New Harmony: A Harp of Thousand Strings* (2006). The latter, in collaboration with hymn poet Richard Leach, pays homage to aspects of Southern hymnody style.

With a Bachelor of Music in oboe performance and a Master of Music in composition, both from the University of Houston, White, a seventh-generation Texan, earned the Doctor of Musical Arts from the University of Texas at Austin. He is currently director of the University of Houston Moores School of Music and holds the Margaret M. Alkek and Margaret Alkek Williams Endowed Chair.

Spirit, Moving Over Chaos

Chorus, oboe or C inst., percussion, opt. handbells, and keyboard

Patricia B. Clark, 1997

David Ashley White, 2002, 2012

Introduction *♩=ca. 63, mysterious, freely*

Oboe

mp *mf* *mp* *mf*

pp

on final oboe pitch, gradually add assorted pitched/unpitched bells and other delicate percussion, termed Atmosphere

Chorus, with Atmosphere

pp

Oo

mp *p* *mp*

(Oo)

p

(Oo)

Transition 1

On downbeat of final choral pitch, add organ/piano/synthesizer pedal tone to Atmosphere.

pp *σ*

If played on piano, play octaves

pp *σ*
Sub-₂

Begin random keyboard clusters (two or more pitches simultaneously), not limited to this particular octave.

pp

As sounds accumulate (all gently played), they lead to Section 1:

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Section 1 *Continuing Atmosphere, pedal tone(s), and clusters*

Chorus

Musical notation for Section 1 Chorus, consisting of three staves. The first staff begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The second staff continues the melody. The third staff begins with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic marking and includes a crescendo hairpin. The lyrics are: Spir - it, mov - ing ov - er cha - os, bring - ing light where there was none, be to us a light, re - veal - ing where the work is to be done. Praise to God, a - mong us dwell - ing, praise the Spir - it giv - ing light.

Transition 2 *Continuing Atmosphere, pedal tone(s), and clusters with crescendo to **mp** as chorus enters*

Section 2 *Continuing Atmosphere, pedal tone(s), and clusters*

Chorus

Musical notation for Section 2 Chorus, consisting of three staves. The first staff begins with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic marking. The second staff continues the melody. The third staff continues the melody. The lyrics are: Breath, in - still - ing an - i - ma - tion giv - ing life, in - form - ing soul, breathe in - to — all our be - ings life that makes the Bo - dy whole. Praise to God, a - mong us dwell - ing: praise the Spir - it giv - ing life.

Transition 3 *Continuing Atmosphere, etc., with crescendo to **mf** and with increasing rhythmic activity, as chorus enters*

Section 3

After chorus enters, Atmosphere, etc. continues with gradual crescendo to *f* as chorus and oboe* begin in canon (two or three canonic entrances, coming a few beats apart). Follow chorus dynamic with diminuendo to the end—the last choral statement of melody should have little percussion underlay.

Chorus

f
Pow - er, Life - force, In - spir - a - tion, blow - ing, breath - ing, brood - ing here,
call, en - liv - en, and em - pow - er for your work, both far and near.
ff Praise to God, a - mong us dwell - ing, praise the Spir - it giv - ing strength. *p*

**In a freely expressive style, the oboe enters as the final part of the canon, shortly following the last choral entrance. As the choral part of the canon begins to end and the solo oboe line emerges more, Atmosphere, pedals, and clusters should gracefully make a diminuendo, gradually leaving the oboe line unaccompanied. If necessary, the oboist may repeat final measures of this section in order to achieve the desired effect.*

Oboe
f
mp
f *pp*

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Transition 4 *At the final oboe pitch, Atmosphere begins, again, as in Introduction, pp delicato.*

Section 4

Chorus, after percussion *Atmosphere* is established

p

Spir - it, mov - ing ov - er cha - os, bring - ing light where there was none,

be to us a light, re - veal - ing where the work is to be done.

rit.

Oo

As chorus ends, percussion continues briefly, staggering entrances of bell sounds and then fading away to nothing.

Composer's note

Spirit Moving Over Chaos had its genesis as a simple hymn, consisting only of an expressive melodic line with a suggested handbells accompaniment, one that comprised only six pitches (D, E, F#, G#, A, and C), all taken from the tune. When the hymn was recorded a few years later by the Choir of Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church, Houston, Texas (*Praise the Spirit*, Gothic Records, G-49254, also available on iTunes), co-director Brady Knapp suggested that we improvise spontaneously, an intriguing approach at the outset of a recording project and certainly a challenge! First, we decided only to use sopranos and altos, although a mixed choir, or men, would also be appropriate. We found a large banner in the Palmer narthex with tiny bells sewn into it, and that was gently shaken to create a mysterious opening effect. Other available percussive sounds were added as the music progressed. One of the singers was also an oboist, with instrument at hand, so she joined in. Brady played a pedal tone D on the organ, then adding tone clusters that created a wonderfully murky effect that eventually propelled us to the high point of the piece. I continued the cluster effect on a synthesizer, also including fragments of the melody.

It is in this spirit of improvisation that this publication was prepared. What is contained on these pages does not necessarily have to be followed literally—rather, this notation could be viewed as an architectural outline, perhaps inspiring new ideas.

The portions marked “transition” are intended to be brief, acting as a connection from one section to the next.

The pitches for pitched percussion and keyboard improvisation are these, in any appropriate octave.



Suggestions for instruments to be used:

1. Rather than oboe: flute, clarinet, violin, or cello.
2. Synthesizer alone would be ideal, rather than organ or piano.
3. Percussion: bells of all kinds, in addition to handbells. Also vibraphone, glockenspiel, finger cymbals, gong, tubular chimes —any “tinkling” kind of percussion.
4. Harp, and almost anything else that would add effective and suggestive color.

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