



3 Billion Birds

For SATB choir + piano

Lyrics by Pamela Hobart Carter

Music by Bronwyn Edwards



"3 Billion Birds"

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This choral piece was sparked by the September 2019 New York Times article about the disappearance of 3 billion birds in North America in the past 50 years. Combining this theme of large scale destruction with small scale efforts to nurture our wild bird populations, specifically the sanctuary of my own back yard, where bird feeders and shelter abounds, "3 Billion Birds" offers many levels of performance, from a simpler version based on the notes on the score, to a more complex interpretation where the choir is afforded the opportunity to improvise.

Two aleatoric sections offer the choir director scope to be creative, whether it is using half of the choir to create sounds of an empty sky / bird "graveyard" or creating a "canopy of chatter" using spoken words, sung names of bird species, or actually making bird sounds, or a combination of all of these. The piano accompaniment may also be adapted to four hands in order to cover the "flight notes" of the opening and third sections, or a harp could add these notes to a two-handed accompaniment. Alternatively, a competent pianist could play the "flight notes" and omit some of the additional bass notes.

"3 Billion Birds" is a great way to celebrate Earth Day. At the time of publication, this song has yet to be performed. My college community choir is working on the piece for our Spring Concert, included in a program of songs about stewardship of our beloved Earth. The recording on the website is a rough demo using my imagination. More information is available at www.sirensong-music.com.

— Bronwyn Edwards | Seattle, Washington | January 2020

3 Billion Birds

For SATB choir, with piano accompaniment for 4 hands

This song was inspired by a New York Times article in September 2019, and by the bird sanctuary in my back yard.

Lyrics by Pamela Hobart Carter

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Adagio, rubato

The musical score is written for SATB choir and piano accompaniment. It begins with a piano introduction in D major, 6/8 time, marked *Adagio, rubato* and *mf*. The piano part features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand. The vocal parts enter at measure 1 with a whole note chord. The lyrics are: "Three bil - lion birds, feath-ered friends". The score is divided into three systems, each containing vocal staves and piano accompaniment. The piano accompaniment continues with the same eighth-note pattern throughout.

1

Primo

Secondo

mf

5

7

Soprano/Alto

Tenor/Bass

mf

Three bil - lion

Three bil - lion birds,

9

feath-ered friends

Three bil - lion birds in

11

Three bil - lion birds in fif - ty years. _____

fif - ty years. _____

13

Gone. _____

Gone. _____

rit.

End 4 hands

$\text{♩} = 90$
molto legato
p marcato

Aleatoric Section I *Random rhythm and words echoing each phrase, sung anywhere on the B natural minor scale:*

16 **Lead voice (varies):** **Alto**

Skies emp-ty out,

Other voices:

(e.g.) (skies, skies, skies) (skies emp-ty out) (emp-ty) (skies, skies, skies)

(e.g.) (skies emp-ty out) (skies emp- ty out) (emp-ty skies)

19 **Tenor** **Soprano**

Who is tak-ing wing? Who is missing?

(tak-ing wing) (who is? who is?) (tak-ing wing) (wing) (mis-sing) (mis-sing, mis-sing?) continue ad lib.

(echo: who is tak - ing wing?) (who is tak - ing wing?) (wing) (wing) (who is missing?) (mis-sing, mis-sing?) continue ad lib.

Detailed description: This block contains the musical score for measures 19 through 21. It features a Tenor part (bass clef, key of D major) and a Soprano part (treble clef, key of D major). The lyrics are: 'Who is tak-ing wing?' and 'Who is missing?'. The Tenor part includes vocalizations like '(tak-ing wing)', '(who is? who is?)', and '(echo: who is tak - ing wing?)'. The Soprano part includes '(mis-sing)' and '(mis-sing, mis-sing?)'. Both vocal parts end with 'continue ad lib.'. The piano accompaniment consists of a continuous eighth-note chordal pattern in the right hand and a simple bass line in the left hand.

22 **Tenor**

Who will control pests?

Detailed description: This block contains the musical score for measure 22. It features a Tenor part (bass clef, key of D major) with the lyrics 'Who will control pests?'. The piano accompaniment continues with the same eighth-note chordal pattern in the right hand and a simple bass line in the left hand.

25 **Soprano** **Bass**

Who will pol-li-nate flowers? Who will spread seeds?

Detailed description: This block contains the musical score for measures 25 through 27. It features a Soprano part (treble clef, key of D major) and a Bass part (bass clef, key of D major). The lyrics are: 'Who will pol-li-nate flowers?' and 'Who will spread seeds?'. The piano accompaniment continues with the same eighth-note chordal pattern in the right hand and a simple bass line in the left hand.

28 **End Aleatoric Section I**

Who will re-gen-er-ate for-ests? _

Detailed description: This block contains the musical score for measure 28. It features a piano part (treble and bass clefs, key of D major) with the lyrics 'Who will re-gen-er-ate for-ests? _'. The piano accompaniment continues with the same eighth-note chordal pattern in the right hand and a simple bass line in the left hand.

31 **Soprano/Alto**

Ev-'ry field plowed un-der, Ev-'ry wet-land drained,

Tenor/Bass

Ev-'ry field plowed un-der, Ev-'ry wet-land drained,

33

Los - _____ es birds, feath-ered friends go,

Los - _____ es birds, feath-ered friends go,

35 **with strength**

May they thrive _____ like the vi - re - o! _____

with strength

May they thrive _____ like the vi - re - o! _____

Aleatoric Section II "Canopy of Chatter"

Random bird species names sung in any rhythm, on any note(s) in the B major scale.

OR, bird calls, chirps, songs, whistles

39 **Choir I**

e.g. Wood-peck-er Stel-ler's Jay Rob-in Chick-a-dee

Choir II

* Where there are no trees, I'll plant na - tive seeds for you,

* Where there are no trees, I'll plant na - tive seeds for you,

*Alto and Bass (low end) to Soprano and Tenor (high end) – sing section within your vocal range.

Optional: 4 hands for this section

43 **Choir I**

Choir II

Where grass - es grow I'll al - low mead - ow homes for you,

Where grass - es grow I'll al - low mead - ow homes for you,

Choir I

Choir II

Wel - come, all feath - ered ones, wel - come to your bird songs,

Wel - come, all feath - ered ones, wel - come to your bird songs,

Choir I

Choir II

Where there are no trees, I'll plant na - tive seeds for you,

Where there are no trees, I'll plant na - tive seeds for you,