

Making Peace

for SATB Choir (divisi),
Tenor + Soprano Saxophone (1 player),
and Piano

Music by:
John Muehleisen

Poem by:
Denise Levertov

*A joint commission by Choral Arts (Seattle)
and the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory Singers,
Robert Bode, conductor*

*Dedicated to the memory of the poet Denise Levertov (1923–1997)
and her passion for peacemaking*

Making Peace

A voice from the dark called out,
‘The poets must give us
imagination of peace, to oust the intense, familiar
imagination of disaster. Peace, not only
the absence of war.’

But peace, like a poem,
is not there ahead of itself,
can’t be imagined before it is made,
can’t be known except
in the words of its making,
grammar of justice,
syntax of mutual aid.

A feeling towards it,
dimly sensing a rhythm, is all we have
until we begin to utter its metaphors,
learning them as we speak.

A line of peace might appear
if we restructured the sentence our lives are making,
revoked its reaffirmation of profit and power,
questioned our needs, allowed
long pauses . . .

A cadence of peace might balance its weight
on that different fulcrum; peace, a presence,
an energy field more intense than war,
might pulse then,
stanza by stanza into the world,
each act of living
one of its words, each word
a vibration of light— facets
of the forming crystal.

Program Note

Making Peace was commissioned as part of a Festival in honor of the famed poet Denise Levertov, whose last years were spent in Seattle. Shortly after moving there, she converted to Catholicism and was a member of St. Joseph Parish, where the work is being premiered. Levertov was a uniquely spiritual person, and the path and diversity of her spiritual journey is legendary. Her passionate embrace of Catholicism shaped much of her later poetry, particular that written during the last decade or so of her life in Seattle (1989–1997). Levertov is buried in Lake View Cemetery, only a few blocks from St. Joseph’s Parish.

When I was asked to compose a work for the Levertov Festival, I was excited to finally set something by this wonderful poet, whose work I had admired for years. As I was looking through several volumes of her poems in my poetry collection, I immediately stopped looking when I read *Making Peace*. Rarely have I had the experience of discovering so many layers and threads of meaning, imagery, and metaphor as in the journey of setting this poem. Levertov’s *Making Peace* is a virtuosic tapestry that poetically weaves together disparate elements of language, music, and poetry itself, all to underscore her passionate advocacy of peacemaking as a way of life and her believe that

society can be transformed through transformative love. Regarding the influence of her faith on her later poetry, one Levertov biography says, “In the works of her last phase [in Seattle], Levertov sees Christianity as a bridge between individuals and society, and explores how a hostile social environment can be changed by Christian values.” All this from someone who started her spiritual journey as a self-avowed agnostic.

For those who know my choral works, they will realize that this is quite a different piece for me, not sounding like most of my other works. This “departure” is inspired in part by Levertov’s poem itself, but also by the unique combination of choir, saxophone, and piano, a ensemble suggested by conductor Robert Bode, when he commissioned the work. Being a saxophonist myself, I relished the idea of composing something for my own instrument and, in particular, for Seattle’s own Michael Brockman, who teaches both classical saxophone and jazz studies at the University of Washington and is Artistic co-Director of the Seattle Repertory Jazz Orchestra. I had been aware of his prodigious talent for years, but we had never had the pleasure of meeting in person. Once we did meet over an extended lunch with Robert Bode, Michael was very generous in sharing his time and talent as we explored different ideas for the saxophone writing in this work, even improvising several possible passages together, with me playing piano. No doubt my own background in both classical and jazz saxophone, as well as Michael’s similar background had a significant influence on my musical decisions. As a result, there are manifestations of both jazz and classical traditions in this work: harmonically, melodically, and rhythmically.

In keeping with the general movement in Levertov’s poem, from the amorphous darkness and stasis of the opening to the brightness and energetic pulsing rhythms of the final stanza, the music follows a similar path, increasingly energized and driven by the saxophone and piano, while the choir conveys the meaning and imagery of Levertov’s text. For example, in the musical setting of the third stanza of the poem—“A feeling towards it, dimly sensing a rhythm, is all we have until we begin to utter its metaphors, learning them as we speak.”—the work finally begins to manifest a clearer sense of rhythm, albeit haltingly at first, as the choir struggles to communicate through disjointed, fragmented melodic and rhythmic utterances our faltering attempts to discover how to make peace. This section culminates in the initial text of the next stanza—“A line of peace might appear if we restructured the sentence our lives are making”—which finally achieves a sense of melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic fluency. There are many musical analogies in this work to Levertov’s masterful use of language, which she uses to describe how individuals and societies struggle with making peace, both internally and externally. As with many of her poems, she also uses her linguistic artistry as a platform for sharing her deeply held belief that peace can eventually permeate “each act of living.”

Score in C

Making Peace

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Dedicated to the memory of the poet Denise Levertov and her passion for peacemaking

Denise Levertov

John Muehleisen

Misterioso (senza misura con rubato) ♩ = 50

2015

The score is for a vocal ensemble and piano. It is in 4/4 time and consists of 9 measures. The tempo is **Misterioso (senza misura con rubato)** at a quarter note equal to 50 beats per minute. The key signature is C major. The vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) are mostly silent, with some rests. The Tenor Saxophone part begins in measure 2 with a melodic line, marked *p* and *mp*, with dynamics *p* and *mp* indicated. The Piano part begins in measure 2 with a melodic line, marked *p* and *mp*, with dynamics *p* and *mp* indicated. The Piano part includes the instruction "like distant sounds of war" and "Loc. (sempre through m. 9)". The score includes a large watermark "DO NOT COPY" and a "PERUSSA SCORE" watermark.

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Tenor Sax

Piano

T. Sax

Pno.

Play into piano

tentatively (as if struggling to rise up and break free)

p *mp* *p* *p* *mp* *p*

Misterioso (senza misura con rubato) ♩ = 50

p like distant sounds of war

Loc. (sempre through m. 9)

(8^{va}) loco

Making Peace

10 *Largo misterioso* ♩ = 56

S *mp* 12
A voice from the dark called out,

A *mp*
A voice from the dark called out,

T

B

Play normally, facing audience

T. Sax

10 *Largo misterioso* ♩ = 56

12 *mp* resolute

Pno. *mf* *mp*

Rea. Rea. Rea. Rea.

14 *(mp)* languid 3 *mf* 16 *mp*

S 'The po-ets must give us i-mag-i-na-tion of peace,

A *(mp)* languid 3 *mf* *mp*
'The po-ets must give us i-mag-i-na-tion of peace,

T *mp* languid 3 *mf* *mp*
'The po-ets must give us i-mag-i-na-tion of peace,

B *mp* languid 3 *mf* *mp*
'The po-ets must give us i-mag-i-na-tion of peace,

T. Sax 14 *mf* *p* 16 *mp*

Pno. 14 16

Rea. Rea. Rea.

Making Peace

mf *resolute* $\overset{3}{\text{trill}}$ 18 *f* 20
to oust the in - tense, fa - mil - iar i - mag - i - na - tion of di - sas - ter.

mf *resolute* $\overset{3}{\text{trill}}$ *f*
to oust the in - tense, fa - mil - iar i - mag - i - na - tion of di - sas - ter.

mf *resolute* $\overset{3}{\text{trill}}$ *f*
to oust the in - tense, fa - mil - iar i - mag - i - na - tion of di - sas - ter.

mf *resolute* $\overset{3}{\text{trill}}$ *f*
to oust the in - tense, fa - mil - iar i - mag - i - na - tion of di - sas - ter.

T. Sax *mf* *f*

Pno. *mf* *f*
ped. *ped.* *ped.* *ped.*

ff *ff* *mp* 22 24
Peace, — not on - ly the ab - sence of war.?

ff *ff* *mp* $\overset{3}{\text{trill}}$
Peace, — not on - ly the ab - sence of war.?

ff *ff* *mp* $\overset{3}{\text{trill}}$
Peace, — not on - ly the ab - sence of war.?

ff *ff* *mp* $\overset{3}{\text{trill}}$
Peace, — not on - ly the ab - sence of war.?

T. Sax *mp*

Pno. *ff* *mp* 22 24
ped. *ped.* *ped.* *ped.*

Making Peace

S *(mp)* *p* *tranneillo* 26 But peace, like a po-em, is not there a - head of it - self, *mf* 3
 A *(mp)* *p* *tranneillo* But peace, like a po-em, is not there a - head of it-self, *mf* 3
 T *(mp)* *p* *tranneillo* But peace, like a po-em, is not there a - head of it-self, *mf* 3
 B *(mp)* *p* *tranneillo* But peace, like a po-em, is not there a - head of it-self, *mf* 3
 T. Sax *(mp)* *p* *p* *mf* 3
 Pno. *(mp)* *p* *mf*
 Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

PERUSIA SCORPE DO NOT COPY

mf *p* 30

S
Peace,

A1
mf *p*
Peace, peace

A2
mf *p*
Peace, peace

T1
mf *p* *mf*
Peace, Peace,

T2
mf *p* *mf*
Peace, Peace,

B1
mf 3 *mf* 3
can't be i - mag - ined be - fore it is made, Peace, peace,

B2
mf 3 *mf* 3
can't be i - mag - ined be - fore it is made, Peace,

T. Sax
3 *mp* 30

Pno.
mp 30
Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

Making Peace

poco accel.

The musical score is arranged for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor 1 (T1), Tenor 2 (T2), Bass 1 (B1), Bass 2 (B2), Tuba Saxophone (T. Sax), and Piano (Pno.). The piece is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of two flats. The vocal parts have lyrics: "can't be known except in the words of its making, peace, peace, peace". The piano accompaniment includes a triplet starting at measure 34. Performance markings include *mf*, *p*, *f*, *mp*, and *poco accel.*. A large "DO NOT COPY" watermark is overlaid on the score.

Making Peace

Risoluto ♩ = 74

rit. -----

S
gram-mar of jus - tice, — syn - tax of mu - tu - al aid.

A
gram-mar of jus - tice, — syn - tax of mu - tu - al aid.

T
gram-mar of jus - tice, — syn - tax of mu - tu - al aid.

B
gram-mar of jus - tice, — syn - tax of mu - tu - al aid.

T. Sax

Risoluto ♩ = 74

rit. -----

Pno.

Recitativo e parlando ♩ = c.. 58

poco accel. -----

S
A feel - ing towards it, dim - ly sens - ing a rhy - thm, is

A
A feel - ing towards it, dim - ly sens - ing a rhy - thm, is

T
A feel - ing towards it, dim - ly sens - ing a rhy - thm, is

B
A feel - ing towards it, dim - ly sens - ing a rhy - thm, a rhy - thm, is

T. Sax

Recitativo e parlando ♩ = c.. 58

poco accel. -----

Pno.

Leg.

*

42 *(mf) haltingly, tentative* *accel.* -----

S all we have un - til we be - gin to ut - ter its met - a - phors, learn - ing them

A all we have un - til we be - gin to ut - ter its met - a - phors, learn - ing them

T all we have un - til we be - gin to ut - ter its met - a - phors, learn - ing them

B all we have un - til we be - gin to ut - ter its met - a - phors, learn - ing them

T. Sax

Poco piu mosso ♩ = 72

Pno. *(mf) f mf f mf f mf* *accel.* -----

46 *f striving* *f striving* *f striving*

S as we speak. A feel - ing towards it, dim - ly sens - ing a rhy - thm,

A as we speak. A feel - ing towards it, dim - ly sens - ing a rhy - thm,

T as we speak. A feel - ing towards it, dim - ly sens - ing a rhy - thm, is

B as we speak. A feel - ing towards it, dim - ly sens - ing a rhy - thm, is

T. Sax

Poco piu mosso ♩ = 78

Pno. *f mf f mf f mf*

accel.

50 52

S is all we have un - til we be - gin to ut - ter its met - a - phors,

A is all we have un - til we be - gin to ut - ter its met - a - phors,

T 8 all we have un - til we be - gin to ut - ter its met - a - phors, learn - ing them

B all we have un - til we be - gin to ut - ter its met - a - phors, learn - ing them

T. Sax

accel.

50 52

Pno. *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *f*

54 56 *ff* G.P.

S learn - ing them as we speak. as we speak. learn - ing as we speak.

A learn - ing them as we speak. as we speak. learn - ing as we speak. *ff* G.P.

T 8 as we speak. as we speak. as we speak. *ff* G.P.

B as we speak. as we speak. as we speak. *ff* G.P.

T. Sax *ff* G.P.

54 56 *ff* G.P.

Pno. *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *ff* G.P.

Adagio tranquillo ♩ = 68

58 *p* as we speak. A line of peace

60 A line of peace

62 A line of peace might ap - pear

Change to Soprano Sax

58 Adagio tranquillo ♩ = 68

60

62

Pno.

Adagio lirico con moto ♩ = 64

64 *mf* tranquillo A line of peace might ap-pear if we re-struc-tured the sen-tence our lives are mak-ing,

66 *mf* tranquillo with growing intensity A line of peace might ap-pear if we re-struc-tured the sen-tence our lives are mak-ing,

64 *mf* tranquillo with growing intensity A line of peace might ap-pear if we re-struc-tured the sen-tence our lives are mak-ing,

66 *mf* tranquillo with growing intensity A line of peace might ap-pear if we re-struc-tured the sen-tence our lives are mak-ing,

Adagio lirico con moto ♩ = 64 *mf* ^{8va}

64

66

Pno.

Reo. Reo. Reo. Reo. Reo.

8

S

A

T

B

re-voked its re-af-fir-ma-tion of prof-it and pow-er, ques-tioned our needs,

re-voked its re-af-fir-ma-tion of prof-it and pow-er, ques-tioned our needs,

re-voked its re-af-fir-ma-tion of prof-it and pow-er, ques-tioned our needs,

re-voked its re-af-fir-ma-tion of prof-it and pow-er, ques-tioned our needs,

f *f* *f* *f* *mf* gradually relax *mf* gradually relax *mf* gradually relax *mf* gradually relax

68 70

(8va)

Pno.

68 70

f *mf*

Reo. Reo. Reo. Reo.

8

S

A

T

B

al-owed long paus-es...

al-owed long paus-es...

al-owed long paus-es...

al-owed long paus-es...

mf *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp*

72 74 76

S. Sax

(8va)

Pno.

72 74 76

mp languid, haunting

Reo. Reo. Reo. Reo. Reo.

Recitativo e parlando ♩ = c. 58

S
A
T
B

mf 78 3 mp 80 mp 3

A ca-dence of peace might bal-ance its weight on that

A ca-dence of peace might bal-ance its weight on that

A ca-dence of peace might bal-ance its weight on that

A ca-dence of peace might bal-ance its weight on that

S. Sax
Pno.

tr
8va
78 80

Recitativo e parlando ♩ = c. 58

mf

S
A
T
B

rit. 82 p molto legato

dif-fer-ent ful-crum; peace, a pres-ence, an

dif-fer-ent ful-crum; peace, a pres-ence, an

dif-fer-ent ful-crum; peace, a pres-ence, an

dif-fer-ent ful-crum; peace, a pres-ence, an

S. Sax
Pno.

rit. 82 p

Adagio lirico con moto ♩ = 64

8va

Leo

84 *f* *p* *p* 86 *molto legato*

S en - er - gy field more in - tense than war, might pulse then, stan - za by

A en - er - gy field more in - tense than war, might pulse then, stan - za by

T en - er - gy field more in - tense than war, might pulse then, stan - za by

B en - er - gy field more in - tense than war, might pulse then, stan - za by

S. Sax

Pno. *cresc.* *f* *p* 86

S *mp* *cresc.* 3 88 *mf* *f* *poco marcato* 3

stan - za in - to the world, each act of liv - ing

A *mp* *cresc.* 3 *mf* *f* *poco marcato* 3

stan - za in to the world, each act of liv - ing

T *mp* *cresc.* 3 *mf* *f* *poco marcato* 3

8 stan - za in - to the world, each act of liv - ing

B *mp* *cresc.* 3 *mf* *f* *poco marcato* 3

stan - za in - to the world, each act of liv - ing

S. Sax *mp* *mf* 3

Pno. *mp* *mf* *cresc.* *f* 88

Leo. Leo. Leo. Leo. Leo. Leo.

90 *f* 92 *mf*

S. one of its words, each word a vi - bra - tion of

A. one of its words, each word a vi - bra - tion of

T. one of its words, each word a vi - bra - tion of

B. one of its words, each word a vi - bra - tion of

S. Sax *mf*

Pno. *f* *Leg.* *Leg.* *Leg.* *Leg.* *Leg.* *mf* *molto rit.*

94 *ff* 96 98

S. light— fa-cets of the form-ing crys-tal.

A. light— fa-cets of the form-ing crys-tal.

T. light— fa-cets of the form-ing crys-tal.

B. light— fa-cets of the form-ing crys-tal.

S. Sax *f* *mf* *molto rit.*

Pno. *ff* *ff* *Leg.* *** *Leg.*

Largo misterioso ♩ = 56

100 *mp* languid $\underline{3}$ 102

S. 'The po-ets must give us i-mag-i-na-tion of
mp languid $\underline{3}$

A. 'The po-ets must give us i-mag-i-na-tion of
mp languid $\underline{3}$

T. 'The po-ets must give us i-mag-i-na-tion of
mp languid $\underline{3}$

B. 'The po-ets must give us i-mag-i-na-tion of
mp languid $\underline{3}$

S. Sax *mp* *p*

Pno. *mf* *mp*

Largo misterioso ♩ = 56

100 102

Lead

104 *mf* 106 *mp* $\underline{3}$

S. peace, Peace, — not on-ly the ab-sence of
mf *mp* $\underline{3}$

A. peace, Peace, — not on-ly the ab-sence of
mf *mp* $\underline{3}$

T. peace, Peace, — not on-ly the ab-sence of
mf *mp* $\underline{3}$

B. peace, Peace, — not on-ly the ab-sence of
mf *mp* $\underline{3}$

S. Sax *mp* *mf* *mp*

Pno. *mf* *mp*

104 106

Lead

108 *p* *mf* molto legato e tranquillo 110 *p*

S. war.' But peace, like a po-em,

A. war.' But peace, like a po-em,

T. war.' But peace, like a po-em,

B. war.' But peace, like a po-em,

S. Sax. *mp* *p* *mp*

Pno. *mp* 108 110

112 *mp* 114

S. A feel - ing towards it, dim - ly sens - ing a rhy - thm,

A. A feel - ing towards it, dim - ly sens - ing a rhy - thm,

T. A feel - ing towards it, dim - ly sens - ing a rhy - thm,

B. A feel - ing towards it, dim - ly sens - ing a rhy - thm,

S. Sax. 3 3

Pno. 112 114

Lea. Lea. Lea. Lea.

116 *p poco agitato* 118

S. A. T. B. S. Sax. Pno.

p poco agitato
A line of peace might ap-pear A line of

p molto legato e tranquillo
A line of peace might ap-pear A line of

p molto legato e tranquillo
A line of peace might ap-pear A line of

p
p 116 118

mf with confidence 120 *p* 122 *mf molto tranquillo*

peace might ap-pear A line of peace might ap - pear A ca-dence of

mf with confidence *p* *mf molto tranquillo*

peace might ap-pear A line of peace might ap - pear A ca-dence of

mf with confidence *p* *mf molto tranquillo*

A line of peace might ap - pear A ca-dence of

A line of peace might ap - pear

mf *p*

mf 120 122

mf

mf

Score for *Making Peace*, page 18. The score includes vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass), Saxophone, and Piano.

Vocal Parts:

- Soprano (S):** peace (mf), A ca-dence of peace (mp), A ca - dence of (p)
- Alto (A):** peace (mf), A ca-dence of peace (mp), A ca - dence of (p)
- Tenor (T):** peace (mf), A ca-dence of peace (mp), A ca - dence of (p)
- Bass (B):** A ca-dence of peace (mf), A ca-dence of peace (mp), A ca - dence of (p)

Instrumental Parts:

- S. Sax:** melodic lines with dynamics *mf*, *mp*, *p*.
- Pno.:** accompaniment with dynamics *mf*, *mp*, *p*. Includes markings for *rit.* and *Senza misura e rubato* with a tempo of $\text{♩} = c. 84$.

Measure Markings: 124, 126, 128, 130, 132.

Performance Instructions: *rit.*, *Senza misura e rubato*, $\text{♩} = c. 84$, *8va*.

Ending: al fine