

Jacob Bancks

Southern Harmony (2014)

Ten songs on shape-note texts for medium voice and piano

1. DEVOTION. (Isaac Watts) *
2. BEAR CREEK. (Isaac Watts) *
3. MULBERRY GROVE. (H. Wood and A. M. Cagle)
4. SOFT MUSIC. (Mary Stanley Bruce Dana)
5. THE OLD SHIP OF ZION. (Thomas W. Carter) *
6. WINTER. (Unknown)
7. HOLY MANNA. (George Atkin) *
8. KEDRON. (Charles Wesley)
9. SYMPHONY. (Isaac Watts)
10. FUNERAL THOUGHT. (Reginald Heber) *

* selections performed at the 2018 NATS Conference

“There are composers for whom writing for unamplified voice is not a priority, for various reasons. Jacob Bancks is not one of them! His choral settings and works for solo voice demonstrate that he has a love and technical mastery for this idiom. He is mindful of the full spectrum of expressive possibilities available to 21st-century composers, as well as of the heterogenous audiences we hope to reach. I have been fortunate to hear and perform a number of his compositions; **Southern Harmony** was created specifically for the voice/piano duo, a traditional and pragmatic combination, but re-conceived for performers and listeners intrigued by the possibilities of a newly-forged hybrid of the traditional and the unprecedented. Jacob has created a major cycle that does not exceed the new-music chops of gifted graduate students, and resonates on both a rigorous architectural level as well as on an evocative and emotional level with the audiences who have heard it performed.”

—JULIA BENTLEY

“In the spirit of Whitman, I believe the essence of American music is the power of manifold, vigorous, and contradictory voices. While writing **Southern Harmony**, as usual I heard many voices: the sometimes bittersweet, sometimes startling meditations of the shape-note lyricists; and the modest, coarse singing of the many ordinary people who have learned this repertoire with spirit and intensity. Most importantly, though, I heard the voice of Julia Bentley: extraordinary musician, generous collaborator, and tireless supporter of composers like myself who desire to have our own voices heard.”

—JACOB BANCKS

Praised as “colorfully orchestrated, invitingly lyrical” (*The New York Times*) and “highly caffeinated” (*The Boston Globe*), the music of composer **Jacob Bancks** (b. 1982, Fairmont, Minnesota) engages and inspires musicians and audiences around the world.

At the core of his output are works for orchestra, with performances by the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Nashville Symphony, the Sarajevo Philharmonic, the Annapolis Symphony, the South Dakota Symphony, the Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphony, and the New York Youth Symphony. Other ensembles that have performed his work include eighth blackbird,

Pacifica Quartet, American Modern Ensemble, Schola Antiqua of Chicago, Cantori New York, Eastman Wind Ensemble, OSSIA New Music, Kobe (Japan) City Philharmonic Chorus, Kyoto Gewandhaus Chor, and Spektral Quartet. Among his most significant projects are repeat and close collaborations with marimbist Makoto Nakura, mezzo-soprano Julia Bentley, pianist Kuang-Hao Huang, the United States Marine Band, and the Quad City Symphony.

Passionate about connecting with and developing audiences for concert music, he is a frequent commentator on WVIK public radio and serves as program annotator for the Quad City Symphony. Recordings of his music have been released by American Modern Recordings and broadcast on BBC Radio 3, American Public Media's Performance Today, and WFMT-Chicago Classical Radio. He has earned awards, honors, and commissions from the Minnesota Commissioning Club, American Academy of Arts and Letters, BMI, the Tanglewood Festival of Contemporary Music, the U.S. Department of Education, Sigma Alpha Iota international music fraternity, Soli Deo Gloria, the International Double Reed Society, the Hanson Institute for American Music, and the Commission Project.

A student of Shulamit Ran, Marta Ptaszynska, Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez, Ricardo Zohn-Muldoon, and Augusta Read Thomas, he also participated in masterclasses with Luca Francesconi and Louis Andreissen. His other mentors include Cliff Colnot, Daniel Horn, and Ray and Sue Sidoti. He holds degrees from the University of Chicago, Eastman School of Music, and Wheaton College (IL) and serves as Associate Professor of music theory and composition at Augustana College in Rock Island, IL.