

When the Earth Stands Still

When the Earth Stands Still

Don Macdonald

Available for

SATB Chorus unaccompanied	1.3632
SSAA Chorus unaccompanied	1.3633
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Curriculum Guide

For Choir Teachers, By Choir Teachers

by: Colleen McNickle & Coty Raven Morris
<https://www.ecspublishing.com/curriculum>

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WELCOME!

We are delighted that you have chosen to purchase this curricular resource for your choirs! We have worked hard to provide you with a comprehensive approach to teaching this piece, while leaving space for you to add your own brilliant ideas. From music theory to social issues to science and literature—we believe all of these topics and more not only belong in choir rooms, but also have the potential to lead to more intentional and empowered choral musicians. We encourage you to think outside the box and engage with your repertoire in mindful and meaningful ways!

Whether you follow this guide step-by-step or simply use the information to inform your instruction, we are confident that you will benefit from this resource. Happy singing!

Teachers are permitted to make copies of the quizzes and activities in this book for students' use.
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Teaching Objectives

Within every piece of choral music lies myriad teaching objectives. Here are a few teaching objectives for *When the Earth Stands Still* that we have addressed within this curriculum guide.

- Students will be able to...
Sing expressively in 4-6 parts with balance and blend.
- Students will be able to...
Perform long legato lines with appropriate text stress and phrasing.
- Students will be able to...
Identify, describe the function of, and perform in shifting meters and measures with hemiolas.
- Students will be able to...
Make informed musical decisions regarding lyrics, mood, tempo, expression, learning process, etc.
- Students will be able to...
Reflect on and make personal the lyrics of *When the Earth Stands Still*, creating a visual representation of the meaning or expression of the piece.
- Students will be able to...
Research and present information about contemporary choral composers describing and identifying characteristics of their compositional style.

notes

Teaching Sequence

Just one way you might consider teaching *When the Earth Stands Still* to your ensemble:

	Teaching Suggestion	Time	Measures
day 1	Introduce Activity One . Singers split into groups of 2-3 to complete activity. Discuss first impressions and musical decisions before turning in activity.	30-45 minutes	full piece
day 2	Introduce Warm-Up One . Introduce mm. 1-11 (or begin with alternative section proposed by students during Activity One). Ask singers to find mm. 1-11 material elsewhere in piece. Sight read 33-43. Focus on balance and text expression.	20 minutes	mm. 1-11, 33-43
day 3	Introduce Warm-Up Two . Review mm. 1-11 with count singing. Lock in rhythms and experiment with conducting patterns to best serve the students' needs. Do the same with 33-43.	15 minutes	mm. 1-11, 33-43
day 4	Introduce Warm-Up Three . Ask students to identify warm-up material within the piece. Sight read mm. 12-32. Assign Activity Two as homework.	25 minutes	mm. 12-32
day 5	Review Warm-Ups Two and Three . Sight read mm. 44-61. Compare this section to mm. 12-32. Check in on Activity Two work thus far.	20 minutes	mm. 44-61
day 6	Review Warm-Up One . Introduce mm. 62-end. Present Activity Two collages.	25-45 minutes	mm. 62-end
day 7+	Introduce Activity Three . Continue rehearsing full piece, paying special attention to meter, legato lines appropriate word stress and accents, balance, and blend.	TBD	Full Piece

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When the Earth Stands Still Warm-Ups

Teach concepts specific *When the Earth Stands Still* by using these original warm-ups.

Objective: 4-Part Balance & Blend

☐ warm-up 1

Teach by rote or project for sight-reading. Sing on neutral syllable, solfege or on the words "Come listen in the silence." Raise and/or lower by half step. Focus on balance, blend, and vowel consistency.

Objective: Shifting Meter

☐ warm-up 2

Use this warm-up to introduce the shifting meter and hemiolas present within *When the Earth Stands Still*. Sing on numbers or with your counting system of choice. Incorporate movements to solidify the meter shifts like steps or conducting patterns.

Objective: Accents in a Legato Line

☐ warm-up 3

Sing on solfege, neutral syllable, or words. Focus on a smooth, supported legato line, interrupted by impactful accents on beats 3 and 5. Raise and/or lower by half step. Incorporate claps or snaps to amplify the accents.

my warm-ups

When the Earth Stands Still Vocabulary

Here are some terms and definitions that are handy when learning this piece:

Term	Definition
Unaccompanied	Performed without instruments.
Meter change	Occurs anytime you change and establish a new time signature.
Duple meter	A meter that has two beats per measure.
Triple	A meter that has three beats per measure.
<i>poco a poco</i>	Italian for "little by little" or "gradually."
<i>rit. al fine</i>	An instruction to slow down until you reach the end of the piece.
Word painting	Composing music that reflects the literal meaning of a song's lyrics.
Dynamic Contrast	The difference between two dynamics; switch between loud and soft abruptly.
Hemiola	The ratio 3:2. When three beats of equal value occur in the time normally occupied by two beats.
Divisi	Dividing a single line or section into multiple subsections.
Your Term:	
Your Term:	

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Musical Decisions

In groups of 2-3, decide how you would like to approach the following musical aspects of *When the Earth Stands Still*. Be prepared to defend your decisions.

2 Tempo

The tempo is marked at $\text{♩} = 47$. At what tempo should we learn the piece? How does the designated tempo feel to you for the piece? Are there any moments within the piece that might be best served by some rubato with our tempo? How much of a *rit.* should we have at the end of the piece?

4 Learning Process

How would you like to learn this piece? Determine with what portion(s) of the octavo you would like to begin and explain why. Would sectionals or full group instruction serve the group best? Why?

6 Standing Arrangement

What standing arrangement should we use when learning this piece? Why? What standing arrangement would serve the performance of this piece best? Why?

Lyrics & Mood

1

Read through the lyrics of *When the Earth Stands Still*. What lyrics stand out to you as the most impactful? What words would you like to emphasize throughout? What mood should we be setting with our tone and expression? How will we accomplish that mood?

Musical Expression

3

Mark or highlight all dynamics and articulation within this piece. How does the composer use these tools to enhance the lyrics and mood of the piece? What moments of musical expression are most important? How quiet should the *pianos* be and how loud should the *fortes* be? Are there any markings that you disagree with? Why?

Conducting Patterns

5

Determine what conducting patterns would be most useful for you as singers from mm. 1-32 and mm. 62-end. Give special attention to the measures with hemiolas.

important note:

Your musical ideas are just as important and valid as any one else's! Even if the ensemble does not ultimately follow your ideas, it is great to practice making these decisions for when you *are* in charge.



“Held In My Arms Photo Reflection”

Materials

- *When the Earth Stands Still* octavo
- Laptop/Tablet/Phone with access to internet
- Photos (physical or virtual)

The poetry from Don Macdonald's *When the Earth Stands Still* could be interpreted in a variety of ways. One way to connect more personally to a text is to create a visual representation of the meaning or expression of the piece.

instructions

1. Mindfully read through the lyrics to *When the Earth Stands Still* and determine to or about whom or what you might sing this song.
2. Create a photo collage (virtual or physical) documenting a relationship or group of relationships (family/friend group) that you cherish. Feel free to include mixed media to enhance your collage: letters, poetry, memorabilia, etc.
3. Finally, write two paragraphs addressing the following questions:
 - Describe some elements of your collage and why you included them.
 - What about *When the Earth Stands Still* prompted you to focus on the subject(s) you chose
 - What emotions do your collage evoke? Why do you think this is so?
 - How might you convey these emotions to your audience while performing *When the Earth Stands Still*?

Be prepared to share with the class



Contemporary Choral Composers Project

materials

- Laptop/Tablet with internet access
- Google Slides, Powerpoint, or a similar presentation program

description

Don Macdonald is one of many living composers currently creating choral music.

Your assignment is to thoroughly research a contemporary choral composer, their educational and musical path, and their choral works. Create a 2-3 minute presentation reporting your research. Be prepared to share with the ensemble.

some options

Reena Esmail
Michael McGlynn
Andrea Ramsey
Jacob Narverud
Alysia Lee
Tesfa Wondemagegnehu
Moira Smiley
Brandon Waddles

...Any other contemporary composer who interests you!

instructions

1. Choose your focus composer:
 - Must be a living composer
 - Should have published in the past 5-10 years
 - Make sure there is enough information about them online for you to create a presentation
 - Report your composer to your teacher for approval
2. Thoroughly research your composer.
 - Find and examine their website
 - Listen to examples of their music
 - Watch or listen to interviews on YouTube or podcasts available
 - Read any articles they have written or in which they been featured
3. Create your presentation in which you share:
 - Their educational and musical path
 - Characteristics of their compositional style
 - Significant compositions
 - What's next for them?

“

Come listen in
the silence of
the moment
before rain
comes down.

Don Macdonald

When the Earth Stands Still

About the Composer

Don Macdonald has a multifaceted musical career that includes professional performing on saxophone, violin, and voice and his conducting resume includes work with orchestra, choir and jazz band.

His composition credits include music for theatre, dance, published vocal arrangements and forays into everything from jazz and electronica to commissions for contemporary classical music. He has written soundtracks to over 50 film and television productions and has received numerous awards for his soundtracks including 3 Leo Awards and the Gerardmer Film Festival Award for "Best Score".

Don has been active as a choral singer since a very young age and as a result many of his works use voice in some way. His commissioned opera, "KHAOS" received a highlighted performance at the 2013 Opera America Conference and his choral works have been performed and recorded by many fine ensembles including Rajaton, the Vancouver Chamber Choir, the Cornell University Glee Club, and Elektra Women's Choir.

Don lives in Nelson, British Columbia, Canada and teaches at the Selkirk College Contemporary Music and Technology Program.

For more information about Don Macdonald, visit his website at <https://donmacdonaldmusic.com/>



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Macdonald on When the Earth Stands Still:

I wrote this for my wife Allison Girvan's small but advanced youth choir, *Laline*, the smallest of 3 ensembles that she directs. I decided to compose a song much as a contemporary songwriter would, with my own lyrics and a form based around repeating verse and chorus. This is probably one of the easiest pieces of mine to learn yet one of the hardest to perform since the long phrases require a great deal of attention to dynamics, breathing, and consistency of tone.



When the Earth Stands Still Quiz

Circle the best answer:

1. *Who composed When the Earth Stands Still?*

- A. Michael McGlynn
- B. Brandon Waddles
- C. Frank Tichelli
- D. Don Macdonald

2. *What do you call a meter that has two beats per measure?*

- A. Common Time
- B. Duple
- C. Triple
- D. Dual

3. *What is the term for when three beats of equal value occur in the time normally occupied by two beats?*

- A. Triple Meter
- B. Meter Change
- C. Hemiola
- D. All of the above

4. *What is the form of "When the Earth Stands Still"?*

- A. Verse-Chorus
- B. ABA
- C. Rondo
- D. Duple

5. *Who of the following is not a contemporary choral composer?*

- A. Moira Smiley
- B. Don Macdonald
- C. Reena Esmail
- D. Benjamin Britten



hey there!

We're Colleen & Coty

Coty Raven Morris is currently the Visiting Assistant Professor of Choir, Music Education, and Social Justice at Portland State University. Prior to this, she was the Director of Choirs at Crosby High School in the Houston area and has served as the Outreach Choir Director at the MSU Community Music School and Music Director at Grand Ledge United Methodist Church.

A newly published author and composer, Morris is a sought after clinician and speaker across the country. She has recently served as the Clinician and Headliner for Florida ACDA, Washington MEA, and Minnesota ACDA as well as the Keynote speaker for the city of Lake Oswego's Juneteenth festival.

Coty is the Founder of *Being Human Together*, a budding community rooted in music education striving to normalize difficult topics in our field through conversation and connection. BHT seeks to discuss traditionally taboo topics like mental health, systemic oppression, diversity, and inclusivity.

Music enthusiast, choral educator, and life-long learner, **Dr. Colleen McNickle** is Assistant Professor of Music Education at Arkansas State University, where she teaches undergraduate and graduate music education courses and conducts Scarlet Voices and the Singing Statesmen. With a PhD in Music Education and Choral Cognate from Michigan State University, Colleen's scholarly interests include music educator wellness and interdisciplinary choral education. Colleen previously taught middle school and high school choirs, piano, ukulele, and music theory in Illinois.

An active clinician, Colleen has conducted choirs and presented research and practice sessions regionally, nationally, and internationally. Colleen is the founder and author of *Inspired Choir*, a blog for choir leaders, singers, and enthusiasts.



Our paths first crossed as we pursued graduate degrees as Michigan State University. Through numerous choral literature classes, conducting lessons, and choir rehearsals, we bonded over our appreciation for choral music education with a purpose. Together, we have published an article in Choral Journal, presented at state and national conferences, and supported each other via our weekly Zoom work calls.

Now, we have paired up to bring you the resources that we wish we had when we taught elementary, middle school, and high school choral ensembles. We have personally selected each piece of music in this curriculum series and look forward to seeing you bring these curricula to life in your own classrooms!

Let us know how it goes by contacting us at the links below!

let's get social!



Similar Guides



RECONCILE

Examine the role of reconciliation with your choral communities via Kyle Pederson's *Reconcile*.

Objectives of this curriculum guide include arranging a narration to accompany performance, articulating the historical and cultural contexts of Swahili language and sing the language with appropriate vowel shapes, and conceptualizing choral creations.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)

SHEEP MAY SAFELY GRAZE

Dive into the Baroque Era with Katherine K. Davis's arrangement of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Sheep May Safely Graze*.

Objectives of this curriculum guide include describing, identifying, and applying characteristics of Baroque composition within *Sheep May Safely Graze*, analyzing the lyrics of the piece and articulating the meaning of the piece, and comparing *Sheep May Safely Graze* with other works by the composer J. S. Bach. .

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)



SOUND THE TRUMPET

Begin your set with a grand fanfare: Henry Purcell's *Sound the Trumpet* as arranged by Alfred Moffat and Rollo Dilworth.

Objectives of this curriculum guide include investigating Baroque characteristics within *Sound the Trumpet*, singing with a tone appropriate to the composition, interpreting lyrics and intent, explaining the difference between a composer and arranger, and creating a simple arrangement utilizing familiar musical materials.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)