

THERE'S A WIND by David Avshalomov

(Program Note by the composer, Feb. 2009)

In this work the chorus must be the wind. Not merely sing about it, nor invoke it, but gradually build up to embody a gale-force wind. It is a technically challenging workout for full 8-part chorus. The text is based loosely on a moment in a well-known American novella where a young couple in jeopardy must flee for their lives to the mountains. A great wind comes up across the day, and blows all night. The wind reinforces the drama at this turning point—and covers their tracks. (In my imagined opera on this story, the chorus plays an important role. They would sing this piece backstage as a scene-changer, to keep the audience engaged.)

In style the work is folk-based. It has simple melodies—short, driving, rhythmic—and uses simple tonal harmonies, except for a few dense dissonant chords depicting choking dust and piled-up sand. The form starts with a mood-setting introduction of quiet wind whistling and humming, then builds up through several rhythmic declamations to a climax on “can you hear it crying?” followed by flowing wind scales alternating in the men and women, gradually dying down to brooding calm at the end.

My deep thanks to my friend and collaborator Meredith Kennedy for commissioning this work, to the intrepid and skilled singers of Camerata, and to their fearless leader Maestro Jonathan Talberg for helping me to workshop and improve this piece during abundant rehearsals before their excellent premiere.