

## Notes

**Circumstances of Composition:** In June 2015, Henry Bromelkamp organized both a symposium held at Concordia College for intentional Eucharistic communities, as well as a benefit concert at St. John Neumann Catholic Church for the homeless. He invited David Haas, Marty Haugen and myself to be the primary singers for the concert. (I'm pleased to report that the concert, conjoined with other auctions and sales that evening, produced about \$40,000 for the homeless.) Henry suggested that we write a "theme song" for the concert, the commission fee of which he could auction off, but speaking for the group I said that I didn't think it was a good idea because we couldn't predict when the Muse might strike or that the finished work would be worthy of the concert. Henry accepted this, but I woke up in the middle of the night on June 10, 2015 with fragments of the text yoked to Sibelius' FINLANDIA hymn tune floating through my mind. By the end of the day I had the first three stanzas of the hymn completed and submitted to GIA to print in the participation booklet they had generously donated to the concert. As fate would have it, the same thing took place a day before the concert when I created the fourth stanza for "A Place Called Home." Obviously we couldn't sing this later addition with the participants at the concert because it had not been printed, but I spoke the text for them before we sang the three stanzas in their booklets. Many present that evening said that this text had brought them to tears; so I think Henry's impulse was rewarded even though there was no commission fee to be donated.

**Textual Issues:** The four stanzas of "A Place Called Home" exhibit a clear progress of thought. Stanza 1 introduces us to the idea of "home" as a shelter for those who are blood-kin or formally adopted, while stanza 2 expands the notion of home as a place of welcome for those who are not blood-kin or adopted. Stanza 3 declares that this expanded notion of home is part of the Judeo-Christian virtue of radical hospitality, a characteristic of the Reign of God at the core of Jesus' preaching. Finally, stanza 4 envisions what a world might be like where the virtue of radical hospitality is universally practiced. Notice that the first three stanzas thank God for the gift of home and its extended meanings while the fourth stanza commits those singing the hymn to work to build such a world.

**Musical Issues:** The hymn tune FINLANDIA is the creation of Finnish composer Jean Sibelius; it is an oasis of serenity in the midst of the turbulent and stirring passages of his symphonic poem *Finlandia*, written 1899–1900. Sibelius himself later reworked the hymn tune into a stand-alone choral piece. Although many believe this melody to be the Finnish national anthem, "Mamme" ("Our Land") is the *de facto* national anthem of Finland. Two of my arrangements are available: SATB, assembly and organ (G-9114); SATB, assembly and piano with flute, oboe, violin and cello obbligato (G-9279).

**Liturgical Use:** Since "A Place Called Home" is not tied to any particular set of scriptural lessons, it may be used in any setting in which the plight of the homeless is highlighted. It might be appropriately sung in the concluding weeks of the liturgical year and the beginning of Advent, when the Roman Rite draws our attention to the consummation of history in the reign of God.

—Michael Joncas