

JS 005
10 minutes, 20 seconds

rules to live by

for SATB and Baritone Soloist

Text by
Members of the
commissioning
ensemble

Music by
Joshua Shank

B&F Music
Joshua Shank

Note from the composer

A few years ago I heard a choral piece in which the composer worked with a librettist to “update” various passages from the Bible and one phrase really stuck out: “If someone hits you in the face, offer them the rest of your face.” This was obviously a reference to the concept of turning the other cheek—a phrase I’ve heard so many times that the concept it’s trying to get across essentially just goes in one ear and out the other—but it was couched in a visceral new language. Ever since I first heard that piece I’ve wanted to try something like that on a grander scale, and a commission from The Choral Project turned out to be the right venue to explore that idea.

When conductor Daniel Hughes and I began to talk about what shape we’d like this collaboration to take we decided we wanted something as universal as possible. I’ve always been fascinated by lists of rules that the various religions and governments of the world have in order for a functional society to form so I suggested we find as many of these lists as we could and then “translate” them into modern verbiage. I gathered excerpts from, among other sources, The Bible, the principles of the Bahá’í faith, a declaration of socialist principles from a 1989 meeting in Stockholm, a mission statement from a non-profit organization, and even a pop song from the 90s. These formed the basis for what would become the text for the new piece, but it was important to me that this work—commissioned for the 20th anniversary of the choir—incorporate the community of that ensemble as well. To honor that history, I asked the members of the choir to finish the phrase “I believe...” as many times as they wanted. Some of the responses I got were cheeky (“I believe there’s no singing allowed in the bedroom”) and others were heartfelt (“I believe in my children”) but they all formed a beautiful picture of the musical community which has been hard at work for 20 years.

The final text is a credo of sorts; rules humanity attempted to follow more than a thousand years ago as well as things some singers from California remind themselves of in their daily lives in the year 2016. It’s my hope that this piece, *rules to live by*, will serve as a keepsake for the choir on their 20th anniversary as well as a gentle reminder for those of us in the audience about how we should be treating ourselves and others.

Performance notes

- To the soloist: sing the non-metered stuff in the same manner as speech, but not too fast. Hold the final notes of the recitative stuff a bit longer (but not too long).
- To the conductor: for the bits in between the non-metered solo where the choir comes in I’m not going to be specific about tempo. My only advice for those passages is to just “Goldilocks” it (not too fast, not too slow) and find what works for you and the ensemble.
- No breaths unless there’s a rest or a breath mark.

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Joshua Shank

“This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3...”

Text

I believe...
...your 'yes' should always mean 'yes.'
...you 'no' should always mean 'no.'
...nothing is ever clearly defined.
...we have many ways to reach the same truth.
...what you give to the world is returned to you.
...no one has the right to end someone else's life.
...hate comes from ignorance.
...the future comes from our dreams.
...in hard work.
...in living a life of integrity.
...compassion has the power to heal.
...we are put here to help people.
...in the power of my own body.
...in the strength of my mind.

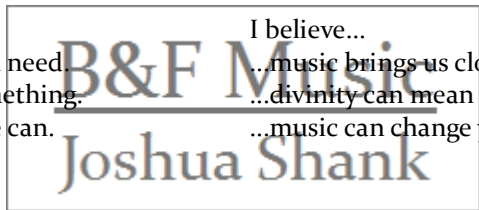
I believe...
...in the goodness of others.
...that I can make a difference.
...in my children.
...in myself.
...I am worthy of love.
...that everyone is.
...that the world is difficult.
...that the world is good.



I believe we should respect those who helped us become a good person.
And we should try to feed those who struggle to feed themselves.
And we should try to defend those who cannot defend themselves.
And we should see a bit of ourselves in everyone that we meet.
And we should show mercy for no reason than that it is the right thing to do.
And we should try to make peace, even at great cost.

I believe...
...that there must be equal rights for all people.
...that we are many cultures but one humanity.
...that diversity is a strength and not a weakness.
...that we should try to create places of integrity.
...that fellowship is the basis of humanity.
...that families can be chosen or given.
...in "us."
...there is no such thing as "them."

I believe...
...we should embrace those who are in need.
...that everyone is struggling with something.
...that we are all just doing the best we can.



I believe...
...music brings us closer to our own divinity.
...divinity can mean a lot of things.
...music can change you.

Text adapted from various sources by the composer. Included in it are responses collected from members of the commissioning ensemble, The Choral Project (Daniel Hughes, Founder and Artistic Director).

Commissioned by Manuel Benitez in honor of his uncle José Montalvan
in celebration of the 20th Anniversary of
The Choral Project (San José, CA)
Daniel Hughes, Artistic Director

rules to live by

for SATB choir and Baritone Soloist

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Solemn (♩ = 84)

*Free time
mf

Baritone
soloist

I believe your 'yes' should always mean 'yes.'

Soprano

ff be - lieve.

Alto

ff I be lieve *p* (A2s out)

Tenor

ff I be - lieve. *p* (T1s out)

Bass

ff I be - lieve. *p*

“This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3...”

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5

I believe your 'no' should always mean 'no.' I believed nothing is ever clearly de-fined.

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7

I believe we have many ways to reach the same truth.

p

be - lieve.

p full section

I be - lieve.

I be - lieve.

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8

“This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3...”

I believe what you give to the world is what is re-turned to you.

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I believe no one has the right to end someone else's life. I believe hate comes from ignorance.

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mp *p*

I be - lieve.

14

I believe the future comes from our dreams.

I believe in hard work.

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I be - lieve.

18

I believe in living a life of in-tegri-ty.

I believe compassion has the power to heal.

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"This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3..."

I believe we are put here to help people I believe in the power of my own body.

I be - lieve.

I be - lieve.

I be - lieve.

I be - lieve.

I believe in the strength of my mind. I be-lieve in the good-ness of

I be - lieve.

I be - lieve.

I be - lieve.

I be - lieve.

mf growing more intense

mf

mf

mf

mf

o-thers. I be-lieve that I can make a diff-rence. I be-lieve ___ in my chil-dren.

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I be-lieve ___ in my - self. I be-lieve I am wor-thy of love.

I be - lieve.

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I be-lieve that ev'-ry-one is. I be-lieve that the world is dif-fi-cult. —

I be-lieve that the world is good. —

I be-lieve. —

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"This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3..."

49 Solemn (♩ = 84)

49

mp

And

mp

And

mp

I be-lieve we should re-spect those who helped us be-come a good per-son. —

mp

I be-lieve we should re-spect those who helped us be-come a good per-son. —

53

we should try to feed those who strug-gle to feed them-selves. —

we should try to feed those who strug-gle to feed them-selves. —

And

And

57

mf And *mf* And

mf we should try to de - fend those who can - not de - fend them - selves.

mf we should try to de - fend those who can - not de - fend them - selves,

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61

mf we should see a bit of our - selves in ev' - ry - one that we meet.

mf we should see a bit of our - selves in ev' - ry - one that we meet.

mf And *mf* And

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65

f We should show mer-cy for no rea-son o - ther — than that it is the right thing to

We should show mer-cy for no rea-son o - ther — than that it is the right thing — to

f we should show mer-cy for no rea-son o - ther than that it is the right thing to

f we should show mer-cy for no rea-son o - ther than that it is the right thing to

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68

do. — And we should try to make peace. — e-ven at great cost.

do. — And we should try to make peace. — e-ven at great cost.

do. — And we should try to make peace. — e-ven at great cost.

do. — And we should try to make peace. — e-ven at great cost.

p *rit.*

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“This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3...”

91

mp

I be -

we are ma - ny cul - tures but one hu - man - i - ty.

I be - lieve, I be - lieve, I be -

I be - lieve, I be - lieve, I be - lieve, I be - lieve, I be - lieve,

96

lieve.

I be - lieve that di - ver - si - ty is a strength and not a weak - ness. I be - lieve that

lieve, I be - lieve, I be - lieve,

I be - lieve, I be - lieve, I be - lieve, I be - lieve, I be - lieve,

101

mf I be - lieve, _____

mf I be - lieve, _____ I be - lieve,

we should try to cre - ate pla - ces of in - te - gri - ty.

mf I be - lieve, _____ I be - lieve, _____ I be -

I be - lieve, I be - lieve, I be - lieve, I be - lieve, I be - lieve, _____

106

I be - lieve, _____ I be - lieve, _____ I be - lieve, _____ I be - lieve, _____

I be - lieve, _____ I be - lieve, _____ I be - lieve, _____ I be -

f I be - lieve that fel - low - ship is the ba - sis of hu - man - i - ty. _____ I be - lieve that

lieve, _____ I be - lieve, _____ I be - lieve, _____

I be - lieve, I be - lieve, I be - lieve, I be - lieve, I be - lieve, _____

"This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3..."

111

I be-lieve, I be - lieve, I be - lieve, I be-lieve,
lieve, I be - lieve, I be-lieve, I be - lieve,
fam-i-lies can be cho - sen or gi-ven.
I be - lieve, I be lieve,
I be-lieve, I be-lieve, I be-lieve, I be-lieve,
I be-lieve, I be-lieve, I be-lieve, I be - lieve,

mf

mf

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"This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3..."

133

133

Bari.
solo

f with sopranos

I be - lieve we should embrace those who are in need. _____

n.

I be - lieve we should embrace those who are in need. _____

I be-lieve, I be - lieve, I be - lieve, I be-lieve,

lieve, I be - lieve, I believe, I be - lieve, I be -

lieve, I be - lieve, I be - lieve,

I be-lieve, I believe, be-lieve, I believe, I be - lieve, _____

lieve, I be - lieve, I be - lieve,

“This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3...”

"This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3..."

I be-lieve that ev'-ry-one is strug-gl-ing with some-thing. _____

I be-lieve that ev'-ry-one is strug-gl-ing with some-thing. _____

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I be-lieve, I be - lieve, I be - lieve

lieve, I be - lieve, I be - lieve we are all

"This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3..."

I be - lieve we are all just

I be-lieve, I be-lieve, I be-lieve, I be - lieve, _____

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I be - lieve, I be - lieve

"This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3..."

"This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3..."

I be-lieve that we are all just do - ing the best we can.

I be-lieve that we are all just do - ing the best we can.

we are all just do-ing the best we can.

just do-ing the best we can.

do - ing the best we can.

"This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3..."

I be-lieve we are all just do-ing the best we can.

I be - lieve we are all just do-ing the best we can.

"This illegal copy will self destruct in 5...4...3..."

147

Slow recitative

mp

I believe music brings us closer to our own di - vinity. I believe divinity can mean a lot of things.

mp

I believe music brings us closer to our own di - vinity. I believe divinity can mean a lot of things.

mp

I believe music brings us closer to our own di - vinity. I believe divinity can mean a lot of things.

mp

I believe music brings us closer to our own di - vinity. I believe divinity can mean a lot of things.

I believe music brings us closer to our own di - vinity. I believe divinity can mean a lot of things.

With gratitude (♩ = 66)

mp

I be - lieve. I be - lieve mu - sic can change you. *rit.*

mp

I be - lieve. I be - lieve mu - sic can change you. *rit.*

mp

I be - lieve. I be - lieve mu - sic can change you. *rit.*

mp

I be - lieve. I be - lieve mu - sic can change you. *rit.*

I be - lieve. I be - lieve mu - sic can change you.

Austin, January 2016