

# How

(from HOW TO GO ON)

SSAATTBB Chorus a cappella  
Text by Barbara Crooker

# HOW TO GO ON

## PROGRAM NOTE

Following the death of a loved one, contemporary poet Barbara Crooker writes, "How can we go on / knowing the end of the story?" *How to Go On* answers this question in eight movements that range from questioning and doubt ("How") to introspection ("Relinquishment") to ultimate acceptance of our own mortality ("When at Last"). Threading solo voices in and out of the choral texture, *How to Go On* asks how we each confront our own mortality, and how, in the face of that knowledge, we can bring quiet grace back into our daily lives. Ultimately, this work finds beauty, catharsis, and solace in the words of three living poets: Crooker, Amy Fleury, and Laura Foley.

*How to Go On* was commissioned from composer Dale Trumbore by Choral Arts Initiative (Brandon Elliott, director); premiered on July 16, 2017 in Anaheim, CA; and released on an album of the same name in March 2017. This piece for SSAATTBB chorus and soloists is approximately 35 minutes long.

## PERFORMANCE NOTES

Soloists may differ from movement to movement.

When a word closes from a vowel to humming on "nn," "mm," or "ing," the transition from vowel to consonant should always be a slow close, not an abrupt one.

Whenever a glissando is marked between two notes, singers should use the entire marked duration of the slide to reach the next note.

The eight movements *How to Go On* may be performed in a different order from the one in this score, or they may be excerpted in performance. Three of many possible movement orders are below, listed along with the conductor or singer who originated that order. Regardless of the order, when all eight movements are performed, "When at Last" should remain the final movement.

1. How
2. However Difficult
3. To See It
4. Relinquishment
5. Requiescat
6. Knowing the End
7. Sometimes Peace Comes
8. When at Last

(Brandon Elliott)

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(Jenny Wong)

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(Ian Chan)

# HOW TO GO ON

*Texts are arranged in the movement order in which they were premiered.*

## 1. How

How can we go on, knowing the end  
of the story?

—Barbara Crooker, excerpt from “Some  
Fine Day,” *The Pittsburgh Quarterly*,  
2007.

## 2. However Difficult

However difficult you think it might be,  
it is yours, this life,  
even the failures  
are yours,  
even the garden, though it be unkempt,  
is yours.

—Laura Foley, excerpt from “Autumn  
Musings,” *Mapping the Fourth Dimension*,  
2006.

## 3. To See It

We need to separate to see  
the life we’ve made.  
We need to leave our house  
where someone waits for us, patiently,  
warm beneath the sheets.  
We need to don a sweater, a coat, mittens,  
wrap a scarf around our neck,  
stride down the road,  
a cold winter morning,

(“To See It,” continued)

and turn our head back, to see it—perched  
on the top of the hill, our life  
lit from inside.

—Laura Foley, from *Syringa*, 2007.

## 4. Relinquishment

I am looking at pale blue ponds of melted  
ice  
on a frozen river  
and in them perfect clouds passing.  
Wind sends ripples along the water  
and trees cut sharp lines into the sky. Soon  
it will be gone, all of it  
and I will be sitting in darkness,  
sitting by a dark window, glad  
for having seen this earth,  
her elegant grace,  
how she turns away from the sun.  
And I will be learning, again,  
how to give it all up by simply turning.  
How to give it up to darkness, all you love.  
All of it.  
How to give it up again and again.

—Laura Foley, from *Syringa*, 2007.

## 5. Requiescat

Let us go, let go with the few roots  
you have left clinging to this earth,  
pull free, like the clean snap of a carrot  
or radish, let us go, shake off this dirt,  
let go, let go of your family, their story  
hasn't been told, yours is already written,  
let go of the world, its sweetness and sorrow,  
let go of your friends, we will cry, yes,  
but we will not forget you, let go,  
let go your fierce will and stubbornness,  
it served you well, now let it go,  
your courage will remain, let your daughters  
become women, your husband lie in his bed of  
pain,  
your long journey is over, theirs is beginning,  
let us go, become spirit and light, spring rain,  
fly away from this prison of bone, let go,  
wait for us, we'll talk again later,  
I am here by the phone, waiting for the call,  
for this long suffering to be over,  
let it go, your work is done,  
soon we will bring you to the river,  
bring your ashes to the current, let them flow  
free,  
earth, fire, cinders, rain, wait for us  
on the other side of the river, let us go.

—Barbara Crooker, from *The White Poems*, 2001.

## 6. Knowing the end

How can we go on, knowing the end of  
the story?

—Barbara Crooker

## 7. Sometimes Peace Comes

Sometimes peace is like this:  
endless and gentle and soft  
and no compulsion to go  
anywhere. And even the fire  
you walked through,  
even the trail of ashes  
is gone, not even a memory  
in your heart, and even the sun is still,  
unmoving and quiet,  
and you have stepped into  
a place beyond time,  
beyond sadness and form.

A wide, high plain  
where in the endless, deep silence  
you find out what it is, what it is,  
and your part in it.

—Laura Foley, from *Syringa*, 2007.

## 8. When at Last

When at last I join the democracy of dirt,  
a tussock earthed over and grass healed,  
I'll gladly conspire in my own diminishment.

Let a pink peony bloom from my chest  
and may it be visited by a charm of bees,  
who will then carry the talcum of pollen

and nectar of clover to the grove where they  
hive.

Let the honey they make be broken  
from its comb, and release from its golden  
hold,

onto some animal tongue, my soul.

—Amy Fleury, from *Sympathetic Magic*, 2013.

# How to Go On

for SSAATTBB a cappella chorus, with soloists

## How

Text by Barbara Crooker

Music by Dale Trumbore

With ever-increasing emotion; ♩ = ca. 50

BASS 1  
How, \_\_\_\_\_ How, \_\_\_\_\_ How, \_\_\_\_\_ How, \_\_\_\_\_ How, \_\_\_\_\_

BASS 2  
How, \_\_\_\_\_ How, \_\_\_\_\_ How, \_\_\_\_\_ How, \_\_\_\_\_ How, \_\_\_\_\_

BASS 3  
How, \_\_\_\_\_ How, \_\_\_\_\_ How, \_\_\_\_\_ How, \_\_\_\_\_ How, \_\_\_\_\_

Piano  
(for rehearsal only)

T. 1  
How can we go on? How can we go on?

T. 2  
How can we go on, How can we go on, How can we go

B. 1  
How, \_\_\_\_\_ How, \_\_\_\_\_ How, \_\_\_\_\_ How, \_\_\_\_\_ How, \_\_\_\_\_

B. 2  
How, \_\_\_\_\_ How, \_\_\_\_\_ How, \_\_\_\_\_ How, \_\_\_\_\_ How, \_\_\_\_\_

B. 3  
How, \_\_\_\_\_ How, \_\_\_\_\_ How, \_\_\_\_\_ How, \_\_\_\_\_ How, \_\_\_\_\_

Pno.



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How to Go On  
How

Freely; ♩ = ca. 40 or slower

(Soloist rejoins Sopranos)

In time; ♩ = ca. 50

25 *ff* *ppp*

S. How\* can we go on?\*\*(nn).

A. *ff* (Soloist rejoins Altos) *ppp*

A. How\* can we go on?\*\*(nn).

T. *ff* *ppp*

T. How\* can we go on?\*\*(nn).

B. *ff* *ppp* SOLO [Baritone] *mp* *pp*

B. How\* can we go on know - ing, know - ing the

25 Freely; ♩ = ca. 40 or slower In time; ♩ = ca. 50

Pno.

\*Every singer sings the first beat of m. 25 together, then moves through the rest of the measure at their own speed, slowly and staggered. The fourth beat should be held until all singers have independently arrived at that beat (on "go").

\*\*Slowly close to "nn" over the course of two beats.

29 *pp* rit. *n*

S. *pp* *n*

A. *pp* *n*

T.

B. *mp* *pp*

B. end of the sto - ry?

29 rit.

Pno.