ABSTRACT

The Four Horsemen is an original composition in three movements that sets the texts of the Greetings and Doxology, the story of the four horsemen, and the River of Life from the Book of Revelation as found in the New International Version of the Bible. The text, which is presented in English, is set for a large SATB choir and narrator with a mixed ensemble, which consists of flute, clarinet, horn, trumpet, piano, organ, and cello. This fifteen-minute composition makes extensive use of pitch and numerical symbolism by way of a twelve-tone row. Although the piece uses a row, it contains elements of tonality and is globally organized around a tonal center. The piece uses several extended vocal and instrumental techniques to heighten the dramatic character of the apocalypse story.

The accompanying document provides historical context for the piece and a discussion of the musical elements and compositional processes used in the work. The symbolic nature of the text, as well as a detailed account of the story of the four horsemen, is also included in this document. The review of repertoire considers a selection of recent works that set portions of the text, as well as compositions inspired by Revelation. The methodology chapter explains the construction, use, and symbolic elements of the row as well as the inclusion and setting of well-known motives like the Dies Irae and the chromatic-fourth lament bass.

An analysis of each movement includes discussion of the use of pitch and rhythmic material, texture, setting of the text, and other musical elements that contribute to and/or enhance the symbology of the work. The first movement establishes C as the tonal center, introduces the row and other important motives, and sets the mood for the piece. The second movement, which includes two ostinato figures (a figure based on the reordered version of the row and the lament
bass), makes extensive use of syncopation and hemiola throughout the multi-metric environment. The final movement sees the return of motives from the first movement; it employs the row’s retrograde and concludes with a plagal cadence.