

## **ABSTRACT**

**CREATIVE PROJECT:** An Analytical Study of Choral Settings of Major Sullivan Ballou's

Letter to His Wife

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Sullivan Ballou (1829-1861), a major in the Union army during the American Civil War, left behind his story in a letter penned to his wife just days before he was killed. Several contemporary composers have set excerpts from Ballou's letter as either choral or solo vocal works. This paper will analyze James Syler's "Dear Sarah," Thomas LaVoy's "The Last Letter," and David R. Peoples's "Always Be Near You" and highlight the musical techniques used to set this prose letter for mixed chorus. These three composers often employ similar musical devices but utilize those tools differently according to their individual purpose. Compositional elements explored include rhythm, harmony, texture, and accompaniment style. Sullivan Ballou's heart-breaking letter to his wife reaches audiences today because this theme resonates with anyone who has ever loved another person: love transcends all. Supplementary material consists of a recording of my complete conducting recital, which includes performances of James Syler's "Dear Sarah" and David R. Peoples's "Always Be Near You" sung by Ball State choirs in 2021.