

concert music

Songs of Migration

for Chorus

p e t e r g i l b e r t

Songs of Migration for Chorus

Commissioned by Szu-Han Ho as part of the Migrant Songs projects

Song of Childhood
Journey through waves
Song of Struggle
Journey of Doves
Song of Frustration
Song of Travel
Journey of Birds

Notes:

The moving interviews which produced the basis for this piece's text shine a light on the multitudinous colors of the contemporary immigration experience. As unique as the stories are, there were a number of themes that began to emerge as points of intersection and commonality. I have tried to mix these interview texts together in moments of unified emotion but then drop back and allow the differentiated personalities to maintain their individual voices.

The primary sonic inspiration for the music comes from birds of the American Southwest. Birds are natural migrators and their cyclical lives of travel and resettlement do illustrate for us a different sense of the polarity of the concept of "home." Birds have beautiful calls that they repeat over and over, sounding beacons through the environment in search of companionship. I have tried to capture some of the birds' freedom and persistence in textures and atmospheres which contextualize the voices of human migration.

Songs of Migration

text based on interviews by Szu-Han Ho with

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Song of Childhood

Peter Gilbert

Crane Solos

A soloist or small group of soloists perform the Sandhill Crane calls throughout. They are to be performed independent of the tempo of group and independent of each other (not synchronized) though listening to the other birds and creating a sense of communication is encouraged. Generally it is good to have dynamic peaks alternating, though in free-timing they will sometimes naturally align.

Sandhill Crane 1

[illegible]

Sandhill Crane 2

Dramatic (♩ = 54)

The musical score is written for two staves, Treble and Bass, in 2/4 time. It features a variety of dynamic markings (*p*, *f*, *pp*) and articulations (*rall.*, *raspy*). The lyrics are 'uh', 'yum', and 'uh'. The score is divided into three systems. The first system has a tempo marking of 54 beats per minute. The second system includes a 'raspy' marking and a 'rall.' marking. The third system ends with the instruction 'continue in a similar manner'.

System 1:

- Treble Staff:** *p* (uh), *f* (yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum), *pp* (uh). A *rall.* marking is above the final measure.
- Bass Staff:** *p* (uh), *f* (yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum), *pp* (uh). A *rall.* marking is above the final measure.

System 2:

- Treble Staff:** *f* (yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum), *pp* (uh), *raspy* *p* (uh), *f* (yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum), *pp* (uh). A *rall.* marking is above the first measure.
- Bass Staff:** *f* (yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum), *pp* (uh), *raspy* *p* (uh), *f* (yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum), *pp* (uh). A *rall.* marking is above the first measure.

System 3:

- Treble Staff:** *raspy* *p* (uh), *f* (yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum), *pp* (yum yum yum yum). The system ends with the instruction 'continue in a similar manner'.
- Bass Staff:** *raspy* *p* (uh), *f* (yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum), *pp* (yum yum yum yum). The system ends with the instruction 'continue in a similar manner'.

Song of Childhood

Peter Gilbert

Sandhill Crane solos should occur simultaneously (out of time) throughout the Song of Childhood.

Calm (♩ = 54)

Narration:

It was green and very beautiful.

Mountains, trees.

I remember a huge garden

*Sandhill Crane Solos
begin and repeat*

p

I re - mem - ber

p stagger breathing

f

p

f

p

Mm _____ Ah _____ Mm _____ Ah _____ Mm _____

full of jasmine and
all different kinds of plants;

And I would take care of it

watering plants

I was happy;

p

I re - mem - ber flo - wers

f

p

f

p

_____ Ah _____ Mm _____ Ah _____ Mm _____

life was simple.
Strangers were welcome.

I loved to listen to music.

I was happy...

p

I re - mem - ber green.

f

p

f

p

_____ Ah _____ Mm _____ Ah _____ Mm _____

Song of Childhood

p

Sandhill Crane Solos gradually end.

I re - mem - ber life

f *p* *f* *p*

Ah Mm Ah Mm

Journey through waves

Narration: My husband would be in line at 2 a.m. to get bread for us. We couldn't eat anything else and it was good if we could get some bread for the kids. One time as he went he saw a friend and it was so bad. Half of the friend's body was under a building. It was very hard, but he couldn't do anything for him. He called out but nothing happened.

There was an explosion where we were used to live, me and my kids. And after that I told my husband, "I don't want to stay here. Let's just leave everything and start something new, even if it's hard. I don't want to lose my kids." So we just left and that's it. I have a degree in Chemistry, I worked in a lab, I worked as a teacher in middle school. My husband worked in the Electricity Ministry. Now I am working as a crossing guard.

Repeat throughout the narration. Gently fade out when narration completes.

f *p* *f* *p*

Ah Mm Ah Mm

Song of Struggle

Peter Gilbert

Pulsing ($\text{♩} = 112$)

Narration:

Because of the war, kids couldn't go to school. Because of the war, not enough money for rent and electricity.

f *Whispered, always emphasizing consonants*

Shuh Shuh Shuh Shuh Shuh Shuh Shuh Shuh Shuh Shuh

7 Because of the war, we couldn't find any jobs, **10**

Shuh Shuh Shuh Shuh Shuh Move move a - no -

f *Ghh yuh*
hold sound against the roof of your mouth, as with clenched teeth

f *Ghh yuh*
hold sound against the roof of your mouth, as with clenched teeth

13 My son was sick. My husband said, " have to start something new." We were sleeping without food.

ther Be - cause of the war Figh - ting ea - ch_o

f *Ghh yuh*
hold sound against the roof of your mouth, as with clenched teeth

f *Ghh yuh*
hold sound against the roof of your mouth, as with clenched teeth

Song of Struggle

19 There wasn't any water falling down from the heaven. In the mountain there is no pasture, because it dries out.
There isn't a lot of food or opportunity.

ther Move move a - no - ther Move move a - no -

f > *f* > *f* > *f* >

Ghh - - - yuh Ghh - - - yuh Ghh - - - yuh

25 It's pretty common that a lot of young girls have to become prostitutes to survive.

ther Ki - ds_ma - ke_you stron - ger Slee - ping wi - th_out

f > *f* > *f* > *f* >

Ghh - - - yuh Ghh - - - yuh Ghh - - - yuh

31 I had always worked, and there were jobs. But they brought machines to cut the beans in the field,
and the corn and the oats. So then there was no job,

food Wo - man where were you Move move a - no -

f > *f* > *f* > *f* >

Ghh - - - yuh Ghh - - - yuh Ghh - - - yuh

37

Song of Struggle

because they started to use machines.

It's hard there. Especially for women. You can't sing
if you are woman

ther There was no wa - ter Slee ping wi - th_out

Ghh - - - yuh

Ghh - - - yuh

43

They say if a woman is working, it's not good. They say, "Oh, that woman is working outside."

They say, "Where were you? What did you do?"

food Have to start a new Move move a - no -

49

ther Move move a - no - ther

Ghh - - - yuh

Ghh - - - yuh

Journey of the Doves

Peter Gilbert

Pick one of the given birds. Perform the bird song in your own time independent of others. Bird calls are notated in multiple octaves. Perform in an octave comfortable for you. Move throughout the performance space as you sing your bird song. Improvised variation is possible. Continue repeating until the narration for this section is finished.

Ruddy Ground Dove

Gentle (♩ = 60) *mp*

Mm Mm Mm

repeat

Inca Dove

Smooth (♩ = 60) *mp*

Oo Oo Oo

repeat

Narration Voice #1: They told me, no big bags, leave it. I'm just crying. Because my important things, my wedding video, my engagement video are in there. Dancing, the video for the first baby when she is coming. My Abaya that my mom brought from Saudi Arabia, it's important for me to wear this Abaya. I just need to take this Abaya from the bag. And my husband is shouting for me to leave it, leave everything. And the kids they are crying and tell me the airplane will leave you or our whole family. And the kids are crying crying and my husband is shouting leave it leave it. And I just want the abaya.

Narration Voice #2: They held us prisoner for 3 days in the airport my 7 kids and I, I was pregnant in a wheelchair. They put us in a small room that was specialized for women who are breastfeeding their kids. And as I sat with my kids, there were two or three women who came in to breastfeed their babies they'd see us and they'd get disgusted and they'd move. They separated me from the kids at gunpoint. I was told we don't want anymore, we're kicking you out. They were so mean. As I was lifted by the two security, and I was pregnant in a wheelchair, two ladies, the whole way they're saying, "you're never going to come back, you're never going to come back, you're never going to come back." All kinds of psychological abuse so you never go back. It was the first time I'd felt racism.

Song of Frustration

Peter Gilbert

Intense and growing more so ($\text{♩} = 72$) gradually slowing (still cresc.)
poco a poco cresc.

mf

Uh _____

mf

Till _____ till _____ that _____ that _____

5

Uh _____ Uh _____ Uh _____ Uh _____

_____ day _____ day _____ I _____ I _____

-- Now grinding ($\text{♩} = 54$) poco a poco cresc.

f

9 Uh _____ Uh _____ Uh _____ Uh _____

_____ ne - - - ne - - - ver - - - ver - - -

gradually slowing (still cresc.)

ff

13 Uh _____ Uh _____ Uh _____

_____ knew _____ knew _____

Solo (spoken):

Till that day
I never knew hate.

Song of Travel

Peter Gilbert

The solo and narration parts should follow directly after one another throughout.

Each member of the chorus enters and proceeds independently and in their own tempo. But they should sound like echoes of the solo part.

Bold ($\text{♩} = 54$)

Narration: We left, we got in another truck.
We couldn't see anything.

I remember the coyote leaving us there.
"Follow me. Don't say anything, don't cry,
don't do anything. Just walk."

Solo: *f* *Freely, emphatically*

Keep_____ go-ing_____

Echoing, getting slower and softer each repetition. *Repeating and slowing in your own time*

Chorus: (in any octave) *mp* *mp* *pp*

Keep_____ go-ing_____

f *f*

Keep_____ go-ing_____ Keep_____ go-ing_____

mp *mp* *mp* *mp*

Keep_____ go-ing_____ Keep_____ go-ing_____

bushes. We had to cover our mouths.

f

Keep_____ go-ing_____

I remember my 5th grade teacher, I was outside speaking Spanish to one of my friends, she said, "This is America. You're supposed to speak English."

pp *mp* *mp*

Keep_____ go-ing_____

Song of Travel

We had to do all of these things
that they never really had to do.
I got bullied a lot. A lot a lot.

f Keep _____ go-ing _____

f Keep _____ go-ing _____

pp *mp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *mp*

Keep _____ go-ing _____

I tried really hard to
really learn English so I
wouldn't have any accent.

Be careful.
Don't get
arrested.

f Keep _____ go - ing _____

f Keep _____

mp *mp* *pp* *mp*

Keep _____ go - ing _____

We were followed at the mall. We
were told "Go back to your country."
We were called "wet back."

And I remember
thinking, my back wasn't
wet when I crossed.

f go - ing _____

f Keep _____ go - ing _____

mp *pp* *mp* *mp*

go - ing _____ Keep _____ go - ing _____

Journey of the Birds

Peter Gilbert

*Pick one of the given birds. Perform the bird song in your own time independent of others.
Bird calls are notated in multiple octaves. Perform in an octave comfortable for you.*

Move throughout the performance space as you sing your bird song. Improvised variation is possible.

*When you meet up with another "bird" who shares your call, look to interact with them.
Alternate calls back and forth, perform in sync with each other, or whatever feels like communication within the bird call.*

Continue repeating until the narration for this section is finished.

Ruddy Ground Dove

Gentle (♩ = 60)

mp

Mm

Mm

Mm

repeat

The musical notation for the Ruddy Ground Dove call is presented in a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked 'Gentle (♩ = 60)' and the dynamics are 'mp'. The melody consists of a half note followed by a quarter note, with a slur over the two notes. The bass line consists of a half note followed by a quarter note, also with a slur. The melody and bass line are repeated three times, with the word 'repeat' at the end. The notes are written on a five-line staff, with the first line being the highest and the fifth line being the lowest. The notes are: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6, B6, C7, D7, E7, F7, G7, A7, B7, C8, D8, E8, F8, G8, A8, B8, C9, D9, E9, F9, G9, A9, B9, C10, D10, E10, F10, G10, A10, B10, C11, D11, E11, F11, G11, A11, B11, C12, D12, E12, F12, G12, A12, B12, C13, D13, E13, F13, G13, A13, B13, C14, D14, E14, F14, G14, A14, B14, C15, D15, E15, F15, G15, A15, B15, C16, D16, E16, F16, G16, A16, B16, C17, D17, E17, F17, G17, A17, B17, C18, D18, E18, F18, G18, A18, B18, C19, D19, E19, F19, G19, A19, B19, C20, D20, E20, F20, G20, A20, B20, C21, D21, E21, F21, G21, A21, B21, C22, D22, E22, F22, G22, A22, B22, C23, D23, E23, F23, G23, A23, B23, C24, D24, E24, F24, G24, A24, B24, C25, D25, E25, F25, G25, A25, B25, C26, D26, E26, F26, G26, A26, B26, C27, D27, E27, F27, G27, A27, B27, C28, D28, E28, F28, G28, A28, B28, C29, D29, E29, F29, G29, A29, B29, C30, D30, E30, F30, G30, A30, B30, C31, D31, E31, F31, G31, A31, B31, C32, D32, E32, F32, G32, A32, B32, C33, D33, E33, F33, G33, A33, B33, C34, D34, E34, F34, G34, A34, B34, C35, D35, E35, F35, G35, A35, B35, C36, D36, E36, F36, G36, A36, B36, C37, D37, E37, F37, G37, A37, B37, C38, D38, E38, F38, G38, A38, B38, C39, D39, E39, F39, G39, A39, B39, C40, D40, E40, F40, G40, A40, B40, C41, D41, E41, F41, G41, A41, B41, C42, D42, E42, F42, G42, A42, B42, C43, D43, E43, F43, G43, A43, B43, C44, D44, E44, F44, G44, A44, B44, C45, D45, E45, F45, G45, A45, B45, C46, D46, E46, F46, G46, A46, B46, C47, D47, E47, F47, G47, A47, B47, C48, D48, E48, F48, G48, A48, B48, C49, D49, E49, F49, G49, A49, B49, C50, D50, E50, F50, G50, A50, B50, C51, D51, E51, F51, G51, A51, B51, C52, D52, E52, F52, G52, A52, B52, C53, D53, E53, F53, G53, A53, B53, C54, D54, E54, F54, G54, A54, B54, C55, D55, E55, F55, G55, A55, B55, C56, D56, E56, F56, G56, A56, B56, C57, D57, E57, F57, G57, A57, B57, C58, D58, E58, F58, G58, A58, B58, C59, D59, E59, F59, G59, A59, B59, C60, D60, E60, F60, G60, A60, B60, C61, D61, E61, F61, G61, A61, B61, C62, D62, E62, F62, G62, A62, B62, C63, D63, E63, F63, G63, A63, B63, C64, D64, E64, F64, G64, A64, B64, C65, D65, E65, F65, G65, A65, B65, C66, D66, E66, F66, G66, A66, B66, C67, D67, E67, F67, G67, A67, B67, C68, D68, E68, F68, G68, A68, B68, C69, D69, E69, F69, G69, A69, B69, C70, D70, E70, F70, G70, A70, B70, C71, D71, E71, F71, G71, A71, B71, C72, D72, E72, F72, G72, A72, B72, C73, D73, E73, F73, G73, A73, B73, C74, D74, E74, F74, G74, A74, B74, C75, D75, E75, F75, G75, A75, B75, C76, D76, E76, F76, G76, A76, B76, C77, D77, E77, F77, G77, A77, B77, C78, D78, E78, F78, G78, A78, B78, C79, D79, E79, F79, G79, A79, B79, C80, D80, E80, F80, G80, A80, B80, C81, D81, E81, F81, G81, A81, B81, C82, D82, E82, F82, G82, A82, B82, C83, D83, E83, F83, G83, A83, B83, C84, D84, E84, F84, G84, A84, B84, C85, D85, E85, F85, G85, A85, B85, C86, D86, E86, F86, G86, A86, B86, C87, D87, E87, F87, G87, A87, B87, C88, D88, E88, F88, G88, A88, B88, C89, D89, E89, F89, G89, A89, B89, C90, D90, E90, F90, G90, A90, B90, C91, D91, E91, F91, G91, A91, B91, C92, D92, E92, F92, G92, A92, B92, C93, D93, E93, F93, G93, A93, B93, C94, D94, E94, F94, G94, A94, B94, C95, D95, E95, F95, G95, A95, B95, C96, D96, E96, F96, G96, A96, B96, C97, D97, E97, F97, G97, A97, B97, C98, D98, E98, F98, G98, A98, B98, C99, D99, E99, F99, G99, A99, B99, C100, D100, E100, F100, G100, A100, B100, C101, D101, E101, F101, G101, A101, B101, C102, D102, E102, F102, G102, A102, B102, C103, D103, E103, F103, G103, A103, B103, C104, D104, E104, F104, G104, A104, B104, C105, D105, E105, F105, G105, A105, B105, C106, D106, E106, F106, G106, A106, B106, C107, D107, E107, F107, G107, A107, B107, C108, D108, E108, F108, G108, A108, B108, C109, D109, E109, F109, G109, A109, B109, C110, D110, E110, F110, G110, A110, B110, C111, D111, E111, F111, G111, A111, B111, C112, D112, E112, F112, G112, A112, B112, C113, D113, E113, F113, G113, A113, B113, C114, D114, E114, F114, G114, A114, B114, C115, D115, E115, F115, G115, A115, B115, C116, D116, E116, F116, G116, A116, B116, C117, D117, E117, F117, G117, A117, B117, C118, D118, E118, F118, G118, A118, B118, C119, D119, E119, F119, G119, A119, B119, C120, D120, E120, F120, G120, A120, B120, C121, D121, E121, F121, G121, A121, B121, C122, D122, E122, F122, G122, A122, B122, C123, D123, E123, F123, G123, A123, B123, C124, D124, E124, F124, G124, A124, B124, C125, D125, E125, F125, G125, A125, B125, C126, D126, E126, F126, G126, A126, B126, C127, D127, E127, F127, G127, A127, B127, C128, D128, E128, F128, G128, A128, B128, C129, D129, E129, F129, G129, A129, B129, C130, D130, E130, F130, G130, A130, B130, C131, D131, E131, F131, G131, A131, B131, C132, D132, E132, F132, G132, A132, B132, C133, D133, E133, F133, G133, A133, B133, C134, D134, E134, F134, G134, A134, B134, C135, D135, E135, F135, G135, A135, B135, C136, D136, E136, F136, G136, A136, B136, C137, D137, E137, F137, G137, A137, B137, C138, D138, E138, F138, G138, A138, B138, C139, D139, E139, F139, 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White Crowned Sparrow

Journey of the Birds

As if from a distance (♩ = 60)

p *Ee* *ee* *repeat*

Roadrunner

With determination (♩ = 69-76)... slightly faster than the others

mf *Rrr-ah* *rah* *repeat*

Narration:

Voice #1

As a person you get fatigued because you're living your life in fear. I don't know if they grabbed him, but maybe they did because that's how it happens cause they just grab you. We hid in a room that has a door where they keep the hay, and I went inside and threw hay on myself so they couldn't see me. And I stayed there for a good long time, because when I got out I was asking around what happened. In order not to lie, I don't remember entirely, but they did get a few, I don't remember exactly, but a few of us remained, only a few of us.

Voice #2

I remember my dad. We were going to Home Depot, and they would do raids there because of the workers. And as the cars were passing by they were asking everyone if they were citizens. We already had a routine. My dad would take off his hat with the Mexican flag, turn on a random English radio station, and...take off his little cross and put everything in the glove compartment. And I would pretend I was asleep because I was darker than him. I don't remember what he would tell the cop, but he would practice it so he didn't sound like he had an accent.

We had a house and then we lost our house, and my mom didn't want to move schools, because it was one of the nicer schools, so we had had to have a certain GPA to prove every semester that we were good students. And one day when my mom took us to school, when we're coming back, we were going over this bridge back to my grandma's house. Well, my mom said there's no more dad. "What do you mean there's no more dad?" She told me that my dad was detained at a Circle K, when he was selling his tires to one of his friends. My mom told me that the cop didn't validate the receipt, he crumbled it up, he threw it away. A short time after my dad was deported. I missed him, obviously. I would call him, and it would go to voicemail. And I knew he wasn't going to answer his phone, but I wanted to hear his voice. His voicemail was funny so I would call it often.

At that time my parents had been selling tamales and burritos in the morning. So every morning I had heard the pots and pans, at 5am. The morning after he was deported, I didn't hear the pots and pans. That's when it kind of hit me that I wasn't going to have my dad anymore.