

*For Vince Peterson and Choral Chameleon*

# STARS

for a cappella mixed chorus

(2009)

by  
Jeffrey Parola

# STARS

How countlessly they congregate  
O'er our tumultuous snow,  
Which flows in shapes as tall as trees  
When wintry winds do blow!—

As if with keenness for our fate,  
Our faltering few steps on  
To white rest, and a place of rest  
Invisible at dawn,—

And yet with neither love nor hate,  
Those stars like some snow-white  
Minerva's snow-white marble eyes  
Without the gift of sight.

- from *A Boy's Will* (1915), by Robert Frost

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## Composer's Note:

Choral Chameleon, a vocal ensemble based in New York City, asked me to be the composer-in-residence for their 2009-10 concert season. This honor entails performances of my compositions, including a world premiere of *Sempiterna* in its entirety, and newly written works for Choral Chameleon's December and April concerts. The piece central to the theme of the December concert is Randall Thompson's *Choose Something Like a Star*, based on the poetry of Robert Frost. Vince Peterson, artistic director of Choral Chameleon, chose the star-theme in order to broaden repertoire options for the December concert beyond, but not excluding, seasonal holiday music.

When searching for text, I hoped to find something that alluded to the star of Bethlehem, while maintaining a celestial, unearthly quality. I read many great poems by Blake, Hopkins, Rossetti, and others; but, when I discovered Robert Frost's *Stars*, I found myself immediately attracted to its sense of wonderment, awe, loneliness and isolation.

I initially doubted the poem's relationship to Christmas. However, after some thought, I realized a connection could be made by focusing on the events that led to the birth of Jesus. As Joseph and Mary sought shelter to prepare for Jesus' birth, turned away by several people along the way, they must have felt lonely, doubtful and skeptical that what was about to happen was truly an act of God. The evening sky, the chill of the night air, and the cold indifference of fellow man must have created for them layers of immense physical and psychological difficulty. Though Christmas is often celebrated cheerfully, it is ironic that Jesus' birth was achieved with a large amount of apprehension and anxiety.

It should be noted that *Stars*, while inspired by elements of the holiday season, is not strictly a Christmas piece, and may be programmed any time of year.

*Stars* is dedicated to Vince Peterson and Choral Chameleon for their generosity of spirit and remarkable enthusiasm for the art of choral music. *Stars* received its premiere performance at the John Street Church, New York City, on 12 December 2009 at eight o'clock in the evening, performed by Choral Chameleon and Vince Peterson, artistic director.

- Jeffrey Parola

# STARS

for Vince Peterson  
and Choral Chameleon

Robert Frost (1874-1963)

Jeffrey Parola (b. 1979)

**Mysteriously** (♩ = 76)

**Soprano** *pp* How count - less - ly they con - gre - gate O'er our tum - ul - tu - ous snow, *p* Which *pp*

**Alto** *pp* How count - less - ly they con - gre - gate O'er our tum - ul - tu - ous snow, *p* Which *pp*

**Tenor** *pp* How count - less - ly they con - gre - gate O'er our tum - ul - tu - ous snow, *p* Which *pp*

**Bass** *pp* How count - less - ly they con - gre - gate O'er our tum - ul - tu - ous snow, *p* Which *pp*

**Keyboard (rehearsal)**

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**S.** *mp* flows in shapes as tall as trees When win - try winds do blow! - - - As

**A.** *mp* flows in shapes as tall as trees When win - try winds do blow! - - - As

**T.** *mp* flows in shapes as tall as trees When win - try winds do blow! - - - As

**B.** *mp* flows in shapes as tall as trees When win - try winds do blow! - - - As

**Kbd.**