

Choked Air

SATB *with piano*



KYLE
PEDERSON

kylepederson.com

Text:**Chaos I:**

*choked air, fires everywhere
can't breathe in, does anybody even care?
broken glass, sirens blast
sinking soul, shrinking fast
spinning mind, I sit and stare
been weary and worried and scared*

*facts--buried somewhere
cracks--in reality shared;
do we despair if we can't tell the truth from a lie?*

*waves are coming, emotions flooding
drowning in conflict, running on empty inside*

Chaos II:

*choked air, fires everywhere
can't breathe in, does anybody even care?
meltdown--of civility
shut down--the economy
stressed out, can't deal, breakdown is coming for me*

*heartbreak--for those mistreated
eyes awake--to the cries unheeded
but I ache for heroes putting their life on the line
torn--in different directions
mourn--for the stain of oppression
look in the mirror, what's at the core? What do I stand for?
so many questions*

The Climb:

*Climbing on the rubble, we stumble ahead
As the ground crumbles again and again
Not giving up and not giving in
through the tears we have shed and the hope we have bled*

Hope:

*There is a light,
Her presence blesses all who lift their eye
She beckons all to the miracles barely visible unless you look...
to the smile behind the mask
open hands behind the glass
to the chance to slow down
to know how to live inside this moment
to notice hearts are open, ready to heal what's broken
There's laughing, friends dancing, hope advancing, people reconciling
Beauty calling, grace falling, love evolving, people rising*

Chaos III:

*choked air, fires everywhere
can't breathe in, does anybody even care?
bottles up, pills go down
family fighting all around
gurneys rolling, who's consoling?
it's taking a toll on me*

Program Notes:

1. This piece is born from a collaborative effort between a talented high school visual artist (Shelby Wright), her concert choir, her choral director (Robyn Starks Holcomb) and the composer. For full details on the story and process, please visit KylePederson.com.
2. The choir is welcome to modify/adapt the text throughout. This piece provides a vehicle that can help you and your students explore the impact of recent current events.
3. For additional performance ideas, please visit KylePederson.com

Choked Air

SATB with piano

Text by Kyle Pederson and
the Roosevelt High School Concert Choir


Music by Kyle Pederson

Heavily Swung Eighths  ♩ = 110-115

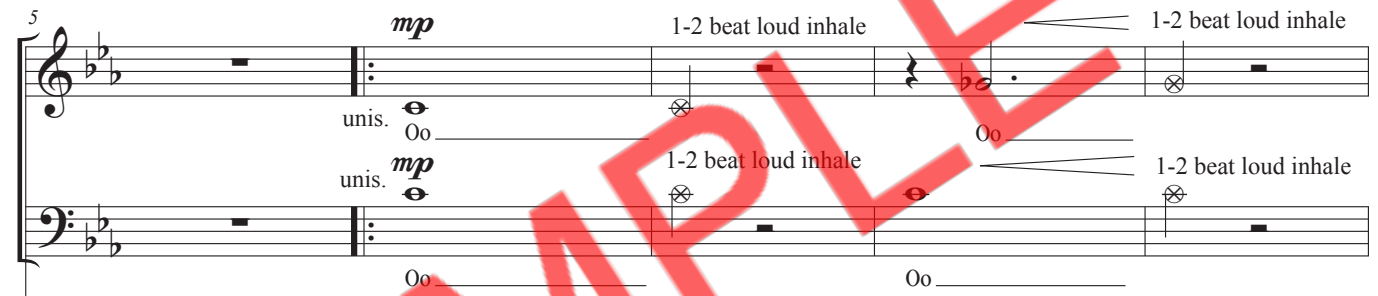
Piano



5 *mp* 1-2 beat loud inhale 1-2 beat loud inhale

unis.  Oo

unis. *mp* 1-2 beat loud inhale 1-2 beat loud inhale



Pno.

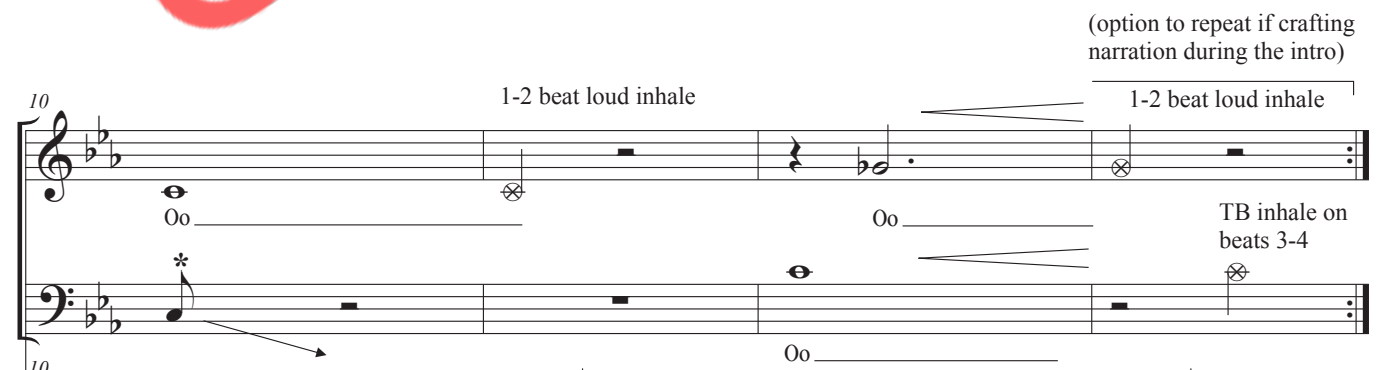


10 1-2 beat loud inhale 1-2 beat loud inhale

(option to repeat if crafting narration during the intro)

Oo

TB inhale on beats 3-4



Pno.



* glottal attack/close-mouth moan and fall downward over 2 beats

14 *mf* *1

Choked air, fires — ev - 'ry - where, can't buh - reathe in. does

Choked air, fires — ev - 'ry - where, can't buh - reathe in, does

Pno. *mf*

17

an - y bod - y e - ven care? Sir - ens blast, bro - ken glass, sink - ing soul, shrink - ing fast,

an - y bod - y e - ven care? Sir - ens blast, bro - ken glass, sink - ing soul, shrink - ing fast,

Pno.

20 *f* *2

spin - ning mind, I sit and stare, been wea - ry and wor - ried and scared. So low,

spin - ning mind, I sit and stare, been wea - ry and wor - ried and scared. So low,

Pno. *mp* *mf* *f*

*1 Sing "fires" as 2 syllables (fi-yehrs)

*2 Choir is encouraged to craft their own spoken/shouted phrases here, in whatever rhythm they determine.

23

back up! When will it end? We don't know!

spread out, When will it end? We don't know!

23

mf

27

mf Facts! *mf* Cracks!

Bur-ied some-where, in re-al-i-ty shared,

27

mp

30

Waves are com-ing, *mp*

Do we de-spair if we can't tell the truth from a lie? Waves are com-ing,

30

Pno.

Pno.

Pno.

Pno.

33

e - mo - tions flood - ing, drown - ing in con - flict and run - ning on emp - ty in -

Pno.

mp

36

side. Choked air, fires — ev - 'ry - where, can't breathe* in,

side. Choked air, fires — ev - 'ry - where, can't breathe* in, does

Pno.

f

39

or do you care? Melt-down of ci - vil - i - ty, shut-down the e - con - o - my,

an - y bod - y e - ven care? Melt-down of ci - vil - i - ty, shut-down the e - con - o - my,

Pno.

* (buh-reathe) as notated in M15-16

42

Stressed out, break-down is com-ing for me! So low, back up!

Can't deal, break-down is com-ing for me! So low, spread out,

Pno.

46

When will it end? We don't know!

46

When will it end? We don't know!

Pno.

50

mf For those mis-treat-ed, to the cries un-heed-ed, but I ache for he-roes put-ting their

Heart-break, Eyes a - wake! but I ache for he-roes put-ting their

Pno.

mf

53

life on the line. — In dif-f'rent di-rec-tions, for the stain of op-pres-sion,

life on the line. — Torn! Mourn!

Detailed description: This system contains the first two staves of music. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef with lyrics. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in bass clef. Both staves feature triplet markings over groups of three notes. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

Pno.

53

Detailed description: This system shows the piano accompaniment for the first system. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The music features chords and single notes, with some triplet markings. A large red 'SAMPLE' watermark is overlaid diagonally across the page.

56

p

Look in the mir-ror, what's at the core? What do I stand for? So man-y ques-tions!

Look in the mir-ror, what's at the core? What do I stand for? So man-y ques-tions!

Detailed description: This system contains the second two staves of music. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef with lyrics. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in bass clef. Both staves feature triplet markings. The dynamic marking *p* (piano) is present. The key signature remains two flats.

Pno.

56

p

Detailed description: This system shows the piano accompaniment for the second system. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The music features chords and single notes, with some triplet markings. The dynamic marking *p* (piano) is present. A large red 'SAMPLE' watermark is overlaid diagonally across the page.

A *Aleatoric Section*

Repeat/build as desired

I can't breathe,

The world is crum - bling a - round us,

58

Pno. (octave hits growing louder as the section unfolds)

60 All unis.

Ah! (with angst, yelling growing louder)

(huge inhale)

Pno.

* **Aleatoric Section:**
 Singers can craft/determine these phrases based on their own experience and what they'd like to communicate here. The goal is to start small, softly, with only a few statements at the beginning. Possible rhythms for some of these phrases are notated above. Consider adding phrase by phrase so the audience clearly hears at least the first several phrases. Also consider having several voices on these initial phrases so they are clearly understood by the audience and provide a solid foundation throughout. Build to more statements until it's a cacophony of confusion, with individual voices coming in randomly with their own phrase as the section progresses.

This entire section can repeat/build as desired.

B

SA unis. *p* *mp* *mf*
Climb-ing on the rub-ble we stum-ble a-head. As the ground crum-bles a - gain and a-gain. Not giv - ing up,

TB unis. *p* *mp* *mf*
Climb-ing on the rub-ble we stum-ble a-head. As the ground crum-bles a - gain and a-gain. Not giv - ing up,

Pno. *p* *mp* *mf*

67 *f*
not giv - ing in, through the tears we have shed and the hope we have bled.

67 *f*
not giv - ing in, through the tears we have shed and the hope we have bled.

Pno. *f*

C ♩=120 slightly faster, no swing (straight eighth notes)

S/A solo *mp* *solo*
There is a light, her pre - sence bless - es all

70 ♩=120 slightly faster, no swing (straight eighth notes)
p
Pno.

S/A solo
— who lift their eye. She beck - ons all to the

73
Pno.

S/A solo
mir - a - cles bare - ly vi - si - ble un - less you look... to the smile be - hind the

SA *p*
TB *p*
Hmm Hmm
Hmm Hmm

76
Pno. *mp*

79

S/A solo
 mask, o-pen hands be-hind the glass, to the chance to slow down, to know how to live in-side this

SA
 — — — — —
 Hmm ——— Oo ——— Oo ———

TB
 — — — — —
 Hmm ——— Oo ——— Oo ———

Pno.

83

S/A solo
 mo - ment, to no - tice hearts are o - pen, read - y to heal what's bro - ken. *mp* end solo

SA
 — — — — —
 Oo ——— unis. There's

TB
 — — — — —
 Oo ———

Pno.

86

SA
 laugh - ing, friends danc - ing, hope ad - vanc - ing, peo - ple

TB
p
 unis. There is ___ a light, ___ There is ___ a light,

Pno.

89

rec - on - ci - ling. *p* There is ___ a light, ___

Beau - ty call - ing, *mp* grace fall - ing, love e -

Pno.

92

There is ___ a light, ___ there's laugh - ing, friends

volv - ing, *mp* and the peo - ple ris - ing; there's laugh - ing,

Pno.

95

danc - ing, hope ad - vanc - ing, peo - ple rec - on - ci - ling,

Pno.

95

there's danc - ing, and hope ad - vanc - ing. Beau - ty

cresc.

98

Beau - ty call - ing, grace is fall - ing, love e - volv - ing,

f *mp*

Pno.

98

call - ing, grace fall - ing, love e - volv - ing, and the

f

101

smoke is ris - ing, oh the smoke is ris - ing!

mp

Pno.

101

peo - ple ris - ing, but the smoke is ris - ing, oh the smoke is ris - ing!

mp

D Heavily Swung Eighths $\text{♩} = \text{♩}^3$

ff

Choked air, fires ev - 'ry-where, can't breathe in, does an - y bod - y e - ven care?

ff

Choked air, fires ev - 'ry-where, can't breathe in, does an - y bod - y e - ven care?

Detailed description: This system contains the first two staves of music. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef, and the bottom staff is a bass line in bass clef. Both are in a key with two flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor) and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo/mood is 'Heavily Swung Eighths' with a 3-beat eighth note pattern. The dynamic is 'ff' (fortissimo). The lyrics are: 'Choked air, fires ev - 'ry-where, can't breathe in, does an - y bod - y e - ven care?'.

Heavily Swung Eighths $\text{♩} = \text{♩}^3$

105

ff

Pno.

Detailed description: This system shows the piano accompaniment for the first system. It consists of two staves: a right-hand staff in treble clef and a left-hand staff in bass clef. The music is in the same key and time signature as the vocal parts. The dynamic is 'ff'. The piano part features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the left hand and chords in the right hand. A large red 'SAMPLE' watermark is overlaid on the page.

109

Bot - tles up, pills go down, fam - 'lies fight - ing all a - round, gur - neys roll - ing, who's con - sol - ing?

Bot - tles up, pills go down, fam - 'lies fight - ing all a - round, gur - neys roll - ing, who's con - sol - ing?

Detailed description: This system contains the second two staves of music. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef, and the bottom staff is a bass line in bass clef. The lyrics are: 'Bot - tles up, pills go down, fam - 'lies fight - ing all a - round, gur - neys roll - ing, who's con - sol - ing?'.

109

Pno.

Detailed description: This system shows the piano accompaniment for the second system. It consists of two staves: a right-hand staff in treble clef and a left-hand staff in bass clef. The music is in the same key and time signature as the vocal parts. The piano part continues with the eighth-note accompaniment and chords. A large red 'SAMPLE' watermark is overlaid on the page.

Small ensemble of treble voices (No swung 8th notes for this line)

112 *mp*

Ens. There is a light, her

SA *f*
It's tak-ing a toll on me! Choked air, fires ev-'ry-where, can't

TB *f*
It's tak-ing a toll on me! Choked air, fires ev-'ry-where, can't

Pno. *f*

115

Ens. pre-sence bless-es all who lift their eye. There is a light, her

SA breathe in, does an-y bod-y e-ven care? Choked air, fires ev-'ry-where, can't

TB breathe in, does an-y bod-y e-ven care? Choked air, fires ev-'ry-where, can't

Pno.

(more treble voices join)

mf

119

Ens. pre - sence bless - es all who lift their eye. There is a light,

SA breathe in, does an - y bod - y e - ven care? Choked air, fires

TB breathe in, does an - y bod - y e - ven care? Choked air, fires

Pno.

122

Ens. her pre - sence bless - es all who lift their eye.

SA ev - 'ry - where, can't breathe in, does an - y bod - y e - ven care?

TB ev - 'ry - where, can't breathe in, does an - y bod - y e - ven care?

Pno.

(more treble voices join)

125 *f*

Ens. — There is a light, her pre - sence bless - es all who lift their eye.

SA *mp*
Choked air, fires ev - 'ry - where, can't breathe in, does an - y bod - y e - ven care?

TB *mp*
Choked air, fires ev - 'ry - where, can't breathe in, does an - y bod - y e - ven care?

125 *mp*

Pno.

(back to just the first S/A soloist)

129 *mp*

solo — There is a light, her pre - sence bless - es all who lift their eye. *

129

Pno.

* Optional unison inhale/exhale of entire choir at the very end of the piece