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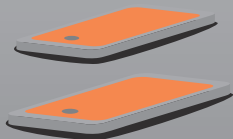
Sherry Blevins

SAB and Piano

**NATIONAL
CONCERTS**
Choral Series

AWAKEN

SHERRY
BLEVINS



Awaken

by Sherry Blevins

Clicking and swiping and doom scrolling,
Clicking and swiping and searching.
Texting and posting; it's overwhelming.
What are we doing?

Why can't we sleep?
Why do we feel this fascination?
Why can't we think?
Why does it cause this consternation?

Our universe is growing,
yet we shrink.
Our hands are ever glowing;
we try to stop, but it's unending.

What is this force?
Why do we stare?
Why am I feeling colder?
This thing is not me;
why can't we see what will set us free?

Our concentration's failing.
Can you hear me?
This distraction is prevailing.
We try to claw out of the darkness.

Where is the hope?
Where is the light?
How can we end this suffering?
Why is love scarcer than hate?
Can we start again?
Or is it too late?

See the sunrise.
Feel the moon glow.
Find a shooting star,
as it streaks across the sky.
Follow the fireflies and your daydreams too.
For the light you feel is still inside of you.

Pay attention. Listen.
Connect with each other,
Feel your heart begin to glow.
Let your passion light a fire in your soul.
Be a beacon of hope for a world overdue.
Make a difference and share the light in you.

Make a difference for each other.
Make a difference and share the light in you!

Composer's Notes

In the summer of 2023, I caught the latter part of a riveting interview on National Public Radio with Johann Hari on his new book, *Stolen Focus: Why You Can't Pay Attention – and How to Think Deeply Again*. I had been feeling in my bones (and my sleep patterns) for some time that something was wrong. Mr. Hari knew why, so I bought the book and began devouring it.

That same summer is when I began contemplating the focus of this piece that I would later compose for National Concerts to premiere at Carnegie Hall. I knew I wanted this music to say something that no one had said before. I had been feeling what many of us were feeling: a frustration because of our addiction to our devices resulting in our inability to pay attention. I was considering the focus of Mr. Hari's book for my piece, but I wasn't certain yet....

Then I attended a state music educator's conference. Because most of my time is spent composing alone or teaching one-on-one, I was bracing myself for the dramatic shift in noise and people. Yet, I walked into the conference hotel at peak check-in time and was greeted with silence. There were teachers and students everywhere, but no one interacted nor spoke a word. Everyone was glued to their phones like zombies, and so it was decided. I had to write about THIS!

“We think our inability to focus is a personal failure to summon enough willpower to ignore our devices. The truth is even more disturbing: Our focus has been stolen by powerful external forces that have left us uniquely vulnerable to corporations determined to raid our attention for profit. Hari found that there are twelve deep causes of this crisis, from the decline of mind-wandering to rising pollution, all of which have robbed some of our attention. Crucially, Hari learned how we can reclaim our focus – as individuals, and as a society.” (*Adapted from publisher's book-jacket description*)

My greatest hope is that *Awaken* helps at least one person to loosen the grip that technology has on them AND that they can once again “See the sun rise, feel the moon glow, and connect with each other” in ways that they have long forgotten.

–Sherry Blevins

About the Composer



Sherry Blevins is a sought-after artist and award-winning composer, lyricist, and music educator who specializes in accessible tonal music with heart and a message. Since 2018, she has had many works published by Hinshaw Music, Fred Bock Music Company, Colla Voce Music, Graphite Publishing, and BriLee Music and has conducted and composed for singers and choirs across the globe.

Sherry's latest passion is working with choirs on joint composing projects, and to date, she has many pieces that have been published as a result of these endeavors. She also frequently serves as a clinician, conductor, and adjudicator for competitions and festivals and holds workshops on conducting techniques, the motivation of singers, and rehearsal planning.

Sherry has a bachelor's degree in music education from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and a master's degree in music education from Appalachian State University. Her hope is that whether through composing or teaching, the music she shares will bring hope and joy to others.

Contact Sherry at sherryblevinsmusic.com.

Commissioned by National Concerts
Premiered June 8, 2024 at Carnegie Hall
Vincent Oakes & Andrew Minear, guest conductors

Awaken

SAB, Piano, Sound Effects, and Staging Suggestions

with gratitude for Johann Hari and
his important book, *Stolen Focus*

Allegro section inspired by
LISZT: *Der Doppelgänger*
(No. 12 from *Schwanengesang*, S560, after Schubert)

Words and Music by
SHERRY BLEVINS
(ASCAP)

*The longer I live, the more deeply I learn that love – whether friendship or family or romance –
is the work of mirroring and magnifying each other's light.*
-James Baldwin

Awaken should begin in darkness. The only light should be from a cell phone or lighted object in each of the singers' hands and something to illuminate the conductor's hands. These should appear to illuminate randomly. (Numbers below each high C in the piano introduction are so that the director can assign each singer a number for when they should turn their device on.) It is best if lights are held the same way one would hold a cell phone. If using cell phones, be sure to have singers place them in airplane mode prior to the performance. Singers should continue staring at phones/lit objects and moving fingers as if texting/scrolling for every measure in the *allegro* section when not singing. It is best if phones/lights stay illuminated for this entire section until the cues in the transition to the lyrical section. (If phones/lights are not available, singers may pantomime this for a similar effect.)

The door-knock sound may be created by knocking on the piano or other object - as long as it sounds like knocking on a door. This sound is always the cue for the next section to enter and for the next section to lift their heads. Until then, singers should continue staring at phones and moving fingers. Cell phones/lights should remain in the same position (at chest level) until measure 66.

Allegro, with great intensity (♩ = ca. 126 - 132)

Door Knock

Piano

8va

1
mp

2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Ped.

Baritones lift heads
on door knock

7

(8^{va})

9 10 11 12

mp

13 *mp* *mp*

B Click-ing and swip-ing and doom— scroll-ing, Click-ing and swip-ing and

8^{va}

mp

16 *mp*

search - ing. Text - ing and post - ing; it's o - ver - whelm - ing.

(8^{va})

mp

19

S

A

B

Altos lift heads on door knock

mf

Why can't we

mf

What are we do - ing? Click-ing and swip-ing and doom - scroll-ing,

mp

19 (8^{va}) *loco*

mp

23

mf

sleep? Why do we feel this fas - ci - na - tion? Why can't

mf

Click-ing and swip-ing and search - ing. Text-ing and post-ing; it's

23

Sopranos lift heads
on door knock

26

we _____ think? Why does it cause this con - ster - na - tion?

o - ver-whelm-ing. What are we do - ing?

mf

26

29

Our _____ u - ni-verse is grow - ing, yet we

Why can't we _____ sleep? Why

Click-ing and swip-ing and doom _____ scroll - ing, Click-ing and swip-ing and

mf

29

32 *mf*

shrink. Our hands are ev-er glow - ing; we

do we feel this fas - ci - na - tion? Why can't we

search - ing. Text-ing and post-ing; it's o - ver - whelm - ing.

32

35 *f*

try to stop, but it's un - end - ing.

try to stop, but it's un - end - ing.

Try to stop, but it's un - end - ing.

35 *f*

38 *sub. mp* *mf*

What is this force? Why do we stare? Why am I feel - ing

sub. mp *mf*

What is this force? Why do we stare? Why am I feel - ing

sub. mp *mf*

What is this force? Why do we stare? Why am I feel - ing

38 *sub. mp* *mf*

ped.

41 *sub. mp*

cold - er? This thing is not me; why can't we see

sub. mp

cold - er? This thing is not me; why can't we see

sub. mp

cold - er? This thing is not me; why can't we see

41 *sub. mp*

poco accel.

44 *f*

what will set us free?

what will set us free?

what will set us free?

mf *ff*

look at phones look at conductor

poco accel.

44 *f*

47 $\text{♩} = 130$ *sub. p* *mp*

Why can't we sleep? Why

sub. p *mp*

Click-ing and swip-ing and doom scroll - ing, Click-ing and swip-ing and

sub. p *mf*

Our con-cen-tra-tion's fail - ing. Can you

 $\text{♩} = 130$

47 *sub. p* *mp*

50 *mf*

do we feel this fas - ci - na - tion? Why can't we

mf

search - ing. Text-ing and post-ing; it's o - ver - whelm - ing.

f

hear me? This dis - trac - tion is pre - vail - ing. We

(8^{va})

50 *mf*

molto rit.

53 *ff* *mf*

try to claw out of the dark - ness.

ff *mf*

try to claw out of the dark - ness.

ff *mf*

try to claw out of the dark - ness.

53 *molto rit.*

ff *mf*

♩ = ca. 88 - 96

58 *mp* *mf* *rit.*

Where is the hope? Where is your light? How can we end this suff - 'ring?

Where is the hope? Where is your light? How can we end this suff - 'ring?

Where is the hope? Where is your light? How can we end this suff - 'ring?

58 ♩ = ca. 88 - 96 *mp* *rit.*

* Very slowly move lit phones/lights straight toward audience at shoulder level. Freeze and hold them there with lights toward the audience. When the sparkling notes happen at measure 67, singers should lower phones and put them away on the same numbers assigned before. (See numbers below bass line in the piano.) Singers should take deep breaths and slowly look up, around, and at each other in wonder and joy, as if they're seeing how beautiful the world is for the first time. Phones/lights should then be subtly put away and out of sight by m. 72. If pantomiming, disregard the notes about the phones and only execute the acting portion of these instructions.

♩ = ca. 64 *rit.* *a tempo* *rit.*

62 *mp* *f* *mp* *p*

Why is love scarc - er than hate? Can we start a - gain? *Or is it too

Why is love scarc - er than hate? Can we start a - gain? *Or is it too

Why is love scarc - er than hate? Can we start a - gain? *Or is it too

62 ♩ = ca. 64 *rit.* *a tempo* *rit.* *cue-notes for rehearsal only*

♩ = ca. 72 - 80 *poco accel.*

67

late?

late?

late?

♩ = ca. 72 - 80 *poco accel.*

67

pp

1 2 3 4 5

Seq.

70

rit.

70

p

mp

loco

6 7 8 9 10 11 12

----- $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 84 - 88$

73 *mf*

See the sun - rise. Feel the moon glow.

mf

See the sun - rise. Feel the moon glow.

mf

See the sun - rise. Feel the moon glow.

73 *mf*

rit. ----- *a tempo* ($\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 84$) rit.

77 *mp*

Find a shoot - ing star as it streaks a-cross the sky.

mp

Shoot - ing star, a - cross the

mp *mp*

Find a shoot - ing star, sky.

77 rit. ----- *a tempo* ($\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 84$) rit.

81 *mf* *a tempo* *rit.* *a tempo*

Fol-low the *fire - flies. and your day - dreams too.

sky. *fire - flies, day - dreams

*Fire - flies, day - dreams

81 *grava* *a tempo* *rit.* *a tempo*

loco

85 *rit.* *mf*

For the light you feel is still in-side of you. Pay at -

too, light you feel is still in-side of you. Pay at -

too, light you feel is still in-side of you. Pay at -

mf

rit.

85 *p*

* "Fireflies" should be pronounced with three syllables as follows: ['fa.ɪə.flɪz].

90 *a tempo* *poco rit.*

p *mf*

ten - tion. Lis - ten. Con-nect with each

ten - tion. Lis - ten.

ten - tion. Lis - ten. Con-nect with each

90 *a tempo* *poco rit.*

mf *p* *mf*

94 *a tempo* *rit.*

mf *mp*

oth - er, Feel your heart be-gin to glow. Let your

Con-nect with each oth - er, be-gin to glow.

oth - er, be - gin to glow.

94 *a tempo* *rit.*

a tempo

98 *mf* *mp*

pas - sion light a fire_ in your soul. Be a

mf *mp*

Let your pas - sion. Fire_ in your soul. Be a

mf *mp*

Let your pas - sion. Fire in your soul. Be a

a tempo

98 *mf*

102 *mf*

bea-con of hope for a world o - ver - due. Make_ a

mf

bea-con of hope for a world o - ver - due. Make_ a

mf

bea-con of hope for a world o - ver - due. Make_ a

102 *mp*

106 *rit.* *f* *mp* *a tempo* *mf*

dif-frence and share the light in you. Make a

dif-frence and share the light in you.

dif-frence and share the light in you.

106 *rit.* *f* *mp* *a tempo* *mf*

110 *f* *f*

dif-frence For each oth-er. — Make a

mf *f*

Make a dif-frence for each oth-er. — Make a

mf *f*

Make a dif-frence for each oth-er. — Make a

110 *mf* *f*

rit. -----

114

dif - frence and share the light in

dif - frence and share the light in

dif - frence and share the light in

ff

ff

ff

rit. -----

114

f

ff

----- a tempo rit. -----

118

you!

you!

you!

----- a tempo rit. -----

118

ff

loco

Rea



NATIONAL CONCERTS

ARTISTIC COLLABORATION AT A NEW LEVEL

About National Concerts

Based in the heart of New York City, National Concerts is dedicated to providing exceptional performance opportunities for choirs of all types. Our productions are thoughtfully curated by renowned conductors, blending thematic narratives with cutting-edge elements such as artistic projection, dynamic lighting, imaginative staging, and world premieres with composers in-residence. At National Concerts, we foster meaningful collaborations between ensembles and industry professionals, delivering extraordinary experiences that leave a lasting impression on both performers and audience members.



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