



A VOICE IS HEARD IN RAMAH

for SATB (div.) Choir, *a cappella*

Text from Jeremiah 31:15 & Matthew 2:18

Music by David Walters



DWALTERS MUSIC

A VOICE IS HEARD IN RAMAH

Performance Notes:

No. 1 - Under each dotted bracket, singers change notes individually, melding from one chord to the next.

No. 2 - Following Rachel, a group of soloists (from any section) sing the indicated fragment (as written or one octave above,) starting with one singer. As more soloists join in, a wall of sound should form as each rendition overlaps with the next. Once all the soloists are singing, whoever was first transitions to the next measure and begins another wave of speaking/shouting. The soloists should be getting louder throughout. At the apex of the shouting, the soloists individually rejoin the choir.

No. 3 - The choir splits into two parts. Following the initiation of speaking/shouting in the soloists, Choir 2 shifts to the indicated fragment, individually joining the wave of soloists, getting louder all the while. At the apex of the shouting, Choir 2 (along with the shouting soloists) rejoins the choir and the sung chord seemingly overtakes the shouting.

No. 4 - Any soloists from earlier in the piece should hang on to their pitch slightly longer than indicated and quickly fade to nothing and the final "waj" should be sung a tempo.

Context:

It is stated in Genesis 30:1 that Rachel has so desired children, she thought herself dead without them. In granting her children, God made her the progenitor of several prosperous Hebrew tribes, the Benjamites among them. Then in Jeremiah, the account is given of the Hebrews subjugation under Babylonian rule. Before the Hebrews were taken to Babylon to be slaves, they were gathered in Ramah, in the land of the Benjamites. Though she was long dead at this point, Rachel was figuratively mourning for the loss of her children and for the loss of all the children of Israel. Her cry could be heard, echoing across time in the souls of those living parents who were presently losing their children.

Furthermore, the Gospel of Matthew recounts Herod's massacre of male children so it is said then that Jeremiah's prophecy received a second accomplishment. Centuries later, Rachel's cry could still be heard, as if caught in some eternal vigil. At its heart, this piece is about the loss of children, the cyclical nature of violence, and the emotional exhaustion that comes from realizing we've been here before.

Pronunciation:

Ramah - rama

Rachel - raxel

Waj - wajə

Waj is an exclamation of grief (woe) in Aramaic, the dominant language of Ramah during the time of Jesus.

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Jeremiah 31:15
Matthew 2:18

SATB(div.) Choir

David Walters

Molto dolente e rubato
♩ = 60-70 *pp*

Soprano
A¹ voice is heard in Ra - mah, [cr]y² - ing and

Alto
A¹ voice in heard in Ra - mah, [cr]y² - ing and

Tenor
A¹ voice is heard in Ra - mah, [cr]y² ing and

Bass
A¹ voice is heard in Ra - mah, cry - - - ing and

7 *mp* *p* *mp* *mf*

S
mourn - ing (ing) mourn - ing, Ra - chel mourn-ing for her

A
mourn - ing, mourn - ing, Ra - chel mourn-ing for her

T
mourn - ing, mourn-ing, Ra - - - chel mourn-ing for her

B
mourn - ing, mourn - ing, Ra - chel mourn-ing for her

¹ connect note, without break, across the barline
² don't pronounce the [cr], enter on the vowel

13 A *Alto solo* *mf*

Solo *mf* Rachel: Wa - j, wa - j,

See note No. 1

S *p* *f* *pp* *cresc.*
 child - ren. A voice is heard in Ra - mah!

A *p* *f* *pp* *cresc.*
 chil - ren. A voice is heard in Ra - mah!

T *p* *f* *pp* *cresc.*
 child - ren. A voice is heard in Ra - mah!

B *p* *f* *pp* *cresc.*
 child - ren. A voice is heard in Ra - mah!

18 *See note No. 2 approx. 30"* *approx. 20"* *approx. 20"*

Solo Soli: wa - j, wa - j,

See note No. 3 approx. 20" *approx. 10"*

Choir 2 wa - j,

ff *ff* *ff* *ff*

23

Solo *ff*

Rachel: Wa - - - j, wa - j, wa - - -

S *mp* *ff*

Wa - j, wa - - - j, wa - j, wa - - - j,

A *mp* *ff*

Wa - - - j, wa - - - j, wa - - - j, wa - j,

T *mp* *ff*

Wa - - - j, wa - - - j, wa - j, wa - - - j,

B *mp* *ff*

Wa - j, wa - j, wa - j, wa - j,

29

Solo B

j,

S *p*

wa - - - j! Cry - ing and mourn - ing, (ing) mourn - ing,

A *p*

wa - - - j! Cry - - - ing and mourn - ing, mourn - ing,

T *p* *mp*

wa - j! Cry - - - ing and mourn - ing, mourn-ing. Ra -

B *mp* *p*

wa - j, and mourn - ing, mourn - ing,

36 *mp* *mf* *niente* *mf* *ff*

Solo Rachel: ..re - fus - ing to be com - fort - ed, ah,

S *mp* *mf* *niente* *p* *whispering only*

Ra - chel mourn - ing for her child - ren [n]³ [because they are no more]

A *mp* *mf* *niente* *p* *whispering only*

Ra - chel mourn - ing for her child - ren, [n]³ [because they are no more]

T *mf* *niente* *p* *whispering only*

chel mourn - ing for her child - ren [n]³ [because they are no more]

B *mp* *mf* *niente* *p* *whispering only*

Ra - chel mourn - ing for her child - ren [n]³ [because they are no more]

C

43 *niente* *pp* *p* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

Solo *niente*

S *pp* *p* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

be - cause they are no more. Mm, mm, mm,

niente

A *pp* *p* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

be - cause they are no more. Mm, mm, mm,

niente

T *pp* *p* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

be - cause they are no more. Mm, mm,

niente

B *pp* *p* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

be - cause they are no more. Mm,

niente

³ Gradually close to "n" and fade to *niente* while individually transitioning to whispering the bracketed phrase, in measure 43: S2, A2, T1 & B1 sing the phrase while the other parts continue to whisper and *diminuendo*, all parts sing at measure 45

49 *pp* niente

Solo

49 *rit.* *p* Rachel: *Mm* *ppp a tempo* *p*

oh, mm, mourn - ing, (ing)

A *rit.* *p* *ppp a tempo* *p*

oh, mm, mourn - ing,

T *rit.* *p* *ppp a tempo* *p*

oh, mm, mourn - ing,

B *rit.* *p* *ppp a tempo* *p*

oh, mm, mourn - ing,

56 *pp* *mp* *dim.* **D**

S mourn - ing. A voice is heard in Ra - mah, heard in Ra - mah,

A *pp* *mp* *dim.*

mourn - ing. A voice is heard in Ra - mah, heard in Ra - mah,

T *pp* *mp* *dim.*

mourn - ing. A voice is heard in Ra - mah, heard in Ra - mah,

B *pp* *mp* *dim.*

mourn - ing. A voice is heard in Ra - mah, heard in Ra - mah,

62 *f*

Solo

Rachel: Wa - j,

62 *pp* *fff* See note No. 4 *ppp*

S heard in Ra - - - mah. Ah! Wa - j! (j) Wa - j.

A *pp* *fff* *ppp*

A heard in Ra - - - mah. Ah! Wa - j! Wa - j.

T *pp* *fff* *ppp*

T heard in Ra - mah. Ah! Wa - j! Wa - j.

B *pp* *fff* *ppp*

B heard in Ra - mah. Ah! Wa - j! Wa - j.

Dedicated to parents, their children,
and the love between them that will never die.

"I have loved you with an everlasting love."
Jeremiah 31:3