

Lord, accept these prayers
of sighs and contrition,
As you inhale the scent of this
sacrifice of words, king of heaven.
Bless and sanctify the letters of this
book of lamentation,
And set your seal upon it
as a testament of truth.

May it stand before you forever,
may it echo in your ears,
May it be the water of my will
pouring forth the milk of my tears.
May it be spoken by mouths of your angels,
may it be preached to all peoples,
May it rise, as if alive and in person,
may it recount the sins I have confessed,
Though I shall die, a mortal,
may I live,
through the preservation of this book.

This book will cry out in my place,
with my voice, as if it were me,
It will reveal the unseen and display
the shape of what is hidden,

May my burden be my broken soul
and my deserted mind,
and may they tell of my sins.

This book will trumpet out my faults,
without break, without end, for all to hear,
This book will document those words
I hold most dear,
It will lament what I have done
and extol what has been lost,
So at the time of eternal life,
on the day of renewed splendor,
At the dawning of the spring,
the first spring light,
My soul might stir with your salvation,
with the hope held out in your inspired Scriptures,
May I bloom, become green and blossom
shoots of goodness that will never dry out.

Amen.

- *From Prayer 88 in St. Gregory of Narek's
"Book of Lamentations."*
*Translated by Thomas J. Samuelian.
Abridged and adapted by the composer.*

From the composer

The works of Saint Gregory of Narek (951-1003) occupy an important position in the development of the language, literature, and Orthodox religion of Armenia. Written near the end of his life, Narek's *Book of Lamentations* is a collection of ninety-four intensely personal prayers, each beginning with the phrase "Speaking with God from the Depths of the Heart." In Prayer 88, the text of this setting, Narek offers a passionate plea for forgiveness and recognition after his own death. It is a profoundly human work that struggles to reconcile the fallibilities and conceits of human nature with the beauty and goodness of God. I wrote the music of greatest anguish first: "This book will cry out in my place, with my voice, as if it were me..."

The text of this setting has been significantly rearranged and reworked from the original prayer in order to fit into a coherent musical structure. Yet each phrase, each individual lament, remains unaltered from the beautiful translation published by Dr. Thomas J. Samuelian. I encourage the discerning conductor, performer, and listener to read the original prayer in its complete form, which may be found online. I am very grateful to Dr. Samuelian for his permission to use his work.

Book of Lamentations was commissioned and premiered on May 13, 2012 by the Canadian Men's Chorus. My deepest thanks goes to the chorus and conductor Gregory Rainville for bringing this piece to life.

Book of Lamentations

Adapted from
St. Gregory of Narek

Patrick Murray

Tempo rubato ma non troppo lento $\text{♩} = 52$

mp

Tenor 1
Lord, ac - cept these prayers of sighs _____ and con - tri - tion, _

Tenor 2
Lord, ac - cept these prayers of sighs _____ and con - tri - tion, _

Bass 1
Lord, ac - cept these prayers of sighs _____ and con - tri - tion, _

Bass 2
ac - cept these prayers of sighs _____ and con - tri - tion, _

Piano
(rehearsal only)

5

as you in - hale _____ the scent of this sac - ri - fice of

as you _____ in - hale the scent of this sac - ri - fice of _

as you in - hale _____ the scent of this sac - ri - fice of

as you in - hale, in - hale the scent of this sac - ri - fice of _

10

words, king of heav - en, Bless _____ and sanc - ti -

words, king of heav - en, Bless and sanc - ti - fy the

words, king of heav - en, the

words, king of heav - en, and sanc - ti -

14

fy this book, And set your seal up -

let - ters of this book of la - men - ta - tion, set up -

let - ters of this book of la - men - ta - tion, set up -

fy _____ this book of la - men - ta - tion, And set your seal up -

18

on a tes - ta - ment of truth.

-on it as a tes - ta - ment of truth.

on a tes - ta - ment of truth.

on it as a tes - ta - ment of truth.

mf *poco rit.* *p*

21 **Poco piu mosso** ♩ = 60

May it stand for - ev - er,

May it stand be - fore you for - ev - er,

May it stand be - fore you for - ev - er,

May it stand for - ev - er,

p

25

may it e - cho in your ears, may it ech - o, may it ech - o, ech - o in your ears, may it ech - o in your ears, may it ech - o in your ears,

29

mp

mp May it be the wa - ter of my will, *mp* May it be the wa - ter of my will, *mp* May it be the wa - ter of my will, *mp* be the wa - ter of my will,

33 *mf* *poco rit.*

will, _____ the milk of my tears, _____

mf *poco rit.*

pour - ing forth the milk, the milk of my tears, _____

mf *poco rit.*

pour - ing forth the milk of my tears, _____

mf *poco rit.*

the milk _____ of my tears,

37 **Con moto** ♩ = 54 *p animando*

May _____ it be spo - ken by an - gels, May

p animando

May it be spo - ken by mouths of your an - gels, May it be preached to

p animando

May _____ it be spo - ken by an - gels, May _____ it be

p animando

May _____ it be spo - ken,

Con moto ♩ = 54 *p animando*