

**280 or less**

Benjamin Ellin - 2019

*Written for Valérie Sainte-Agathe and the San Francisco Girls Chorus*

'280 or less' is a short work for acapella girls chorus in three movements. It was written in 2019. The text uses three twitter hashtags and social media words; snippets, soundbites or ideas of language that permeate our day-to-day life.

This text presents an opportunity to play with the sounds of words in an age when they potentially seem to lose some of their actual meaning, but it also gives rise to an emotionally charged response, particularly in movement three, to the sentiment behind the hashtag itself.

Given the joy I had at hearing the San Francisco Girls Chorus in London earlier in 2019, I have not been shy in making technical demands of the singers despite this being a short work. The fault is mine, but the reason is their brilliance and the energy of their leader, Valérie.

Benjamin Ellin, Bolton, UK, September 2019



Written for Valerie Sainte-Agathe and the San Francisco Girls Chorus

# 280 or less.

i. - Be here.

Benjamin Ellin, 2019

Flowing and with mystery.  $\downarrow$  = 55 ca

Soprano 1 *mf dolce* To, be there.

Soprano 2 *mf dolce* To, be there.

Soprano 3 *mp* To, be there.

Alto 1 *mp* To, (poco) *mp sub* To, (poco) *mp sub* To, (poco) *mp sub* To, (poco) *mp sub*

Alto 2 *mp* (Like a latin 'u') Ooo, Eee, Ooo, (poco) *mp sub* Ooo, Eee, Ooo, (poco) *mp sub* Ooo, Eee, Ooo, (poco) *mp sub* Ooo, Eee, Ooo, (poco) *mp sub*

Alto 3 *mp* To, (poco) *mp sub* To, (poco) *mp sub* To, (poco) *mp sub* To, (poco) *mp sub*

Alto 4 *mp* To, (poco) *mp sub* To, (poco) *mp sub* To, (poco) *mp sub* To, (poco) *mp sub*

**A**

(2,2,3,2)

(3,2)

S. 1 *mf* To\_\_\_ be\_\_\_ there. There to be. Be there. To there. To\_\_\_

S. 2 *mf* To\_\_\_ be\_\_\_ there. There to\_\_\_ be. Be there. To there. To\_\_\_

S. 3 *mp* There to be. There to be. There to be.

A. 1 *mp sotto voce* To\_\_\_ be\_\_\_ To. be there. To\_\_\_ be\_\_\_ To. be To be there. *pp* Oo ee oo ee oo ee oo ee oo. There to\_\_\_ be. Be\_\_\_ there\_\_\_ be\_\_\_

A. 2 *mp sotto voce* To\_\_\_ be\_\_\_ To. be there. To\_\_\_ be\_\_\_ To. be To be there. *pp* Oo ee oo ee oo ee oo ee oo. There to\_\_\_ be. Be\_\_\_ there\_\_\_ be\_\_\_

A. 3 *mp sotto voce* To\_\_\_ be\_\_\_ To. be there. To\_\_\_ be\_\_\_ To. be To be there. *pp* Oo ee oo ee oo ee oo ee oo. There to\_\_\_ be. Be\_\_\_ there\_\_\_ be\_\_\_

A. 4 *mp* There to be. There to be. There to be.

**B** (3,2)

(3,2)

(2,3)

S. 1  
 be \_\_\_\_\_ there\_

*mf sfz* Throw back!

*mf sfz* Throw\_ back!

*mf sfz* Throw back!

*mf sfz* Throw\_ back!

S. 2  
 be \_\_\_\_\_ there\_

*mf sfz* Throw back!

*mf sfz* Throw\_ back!

*mf sfz* Throw back!

*mf sfz* Throw\_ back!

S. 3

*mf sfz* Throw back!

*mf sfz* Throw\_ back!

*mf sfz* Throw back!

*mf sfz* Throw\_ back!

A. 1  
 To \_\_\_\_\_ be \_\_\_\_\_ there. To be there.

*p sfz* Throw \_\_\_\_\_ back!

*p sfz* Throw \_\_\_\_\_ back!

*p sfz* Throw \_\_\_\_\_ back!

*mf sfz* Throw \_\_\_\_\_ back!

A. 2  
 To \_\_\_\_\_ be \_\_\_\_\_ there. To be there.

*p sfz* Throw \_\_\_\_\_ back!

*p sfz* Throw \_\_\_\_\_ back!

*p sfz* Throw \_\_\_\_\_ back!

*mf sfz* Throw \_\_\_\_\_ back!

A. 3  
 To \_\_\_\_\_ be \_\_\_\_\_ there. To be there.

*fp sfz* Throw \_\_\_\_\_ back!

*fp sfz* Throw \_\_\_\_\_ back!

*fp sfz* Throw \_\_\_\_\_ back!

*mf sfz* Throw \_\_\_\_\_ back!

A. 4

*fp sfz* Throw \_\_\_\_\_ back!

*fp sfz* Throw \_\_\_\_\_ back!

*fp sfz* Throw \_\_\_\_\_ back!

*mf sfz* Throw \_\_\_\_\_ back!

*mf sfz* Throw \_\_\_\_\_ back!

\*\*\* = foot stamp  
and clap. Loud. With force.

(3,2)

*poco f* but warm

(3,2)

S. 1  
\*\*\*  
Ah  
*pp*  
poco *f* but warm  
p  
sfz  
p  
sfz

S. 2  
\*\*\*  
f  
Throw back Thurs day.  
p  
sfz  
Throw! back!  
p  
sfz

S. 3  
\*\*\*  
f  
Throw back Thurs day.  
p  
sfz  
Throw! back!  
p  
sfz

A. 1  
\*\*\*  
f  
Throw back Thurs day.  
p  
sfz  
Throw! back!  
p  
sfz

A. 2  
\*\*\*  
f  
Throw back Thurs day.  
p  
sfz  
Throw! back!  
p  
sfz

A. 3  
\*\*\*  
f  
Throw back Thurs day.  
p  
sfz  
Throw! back!  
p  
sfz

A. 4  
\*\*\*  
pp  
Ah  
poco *f* but warm  
p  
sfz

**D**

Winding down... *p* (Like a latin 'u')

27

S. 1 *p* *sfz* Throw! \_\_\_ back! back! back! back! bah. bah. bah. bah. bah. bah. *p* (Like a latin 'u') Ooo

S. 2 *p* *sfz* Throw! \_\_\_ back! back! back! back! bah. bah. bah. bah. bah. bah. *p* mmm...

S. 3 *p* *sfz* Throw! \_\_\_ back! back! back! back! bah. bah. bah. bah. bah. bah. *p* mmm...

A. 1 *p* *sfz* Throw! \_\_\_ back! back! back! back! bah. bah. bah. bah. bah. bah. *pp* (Like a latin 'u') Ooo, Eee, Ooo, To be here. Ooo, Eee, Ooo,

A. 2 *p* *sfz* Throw! \_\_\_ back! back! back! back! bah. bah. bah. bah. bah. bah. *pp* To, \_\_\_ To, \_\_\_ To, \_\_\_ To be... Ooo, Eee, Ooo,

A. 3 *p* *sfz* Throw! \_\_\_ back! back! back! back! bah. bah. bah. bah. bah. bah. *pp* To, \_\_\_ To, \_\_\_ To, \_\_\_ Be. To, \_\_\_ To, \_\_\_ To, \_\_\_

A. 4 *p* *sfz* Throw! \_\_\_ back! back! back! back! bah. bah. bah. bah. bah. bah. *p* (Like a latin 'u') Ooo

32

S. 1 To be here. To be here. To be here. To be here. Here... mmm...

S. 2 To be here. To be here. To be here. To be here. Here... mmm...

S. 3 To be here. To be here. To be here. To be here. Here... mmm...

A. 1 To be here. To be here. To be here. To be here. Here... mmm...

A. 2 To be here. To be here. To be here. To be here. Here... mmm...

A. 3 To be here. To be here. To be here. To be here. Here... mmm...

A. 4 To be here. To be here. To be here. To be here. Here... mmm...



\* - like the fe in 'fed'.  
 \*\* - explosive V - like a phonetic 'V'

ii. - Midnight thumbs

Benjamin Ellin, 2019

Brilliant and full of bite. ♩ = 140

Soprano 1 *f* explosive energy - always  
 C0 \_\_\_\_\_

Soprano 2 *f* explosive energy - always  
 C0 \_\_\_\_\_

Alto 1 *f* explosive energy - always  
 C0 \_\_\_\_\_

Alto 2 *f* explosive energy - always  
 C0 \_\_\_\_\_

*sfz* > *p* *f* CLAP

*sfz* > *p* *f* CLAP

*sfz* > *p* *f* CLAP

*sfz* > *p* *f* CLAP



9

S. 1 *p*

S. 2 *p*

A. 1 *pp*

A. 2 *pp*

The musical score is presented in four systems, each corresponding to a voice part: S. 1 (Soprano 1), S. 2 (Soprano 2), A. 1 (Alto 1), and A. 2 (Alto 2). The time signature is 3/4. The score begins at measure 9, indicated by a '9' at the top left. Each system starts with a treble clef and a dynamic marking: *p* for S. 1 and S. 2, and *pp* for A. 1 and A. 2. The vocal lines consist of eighth and quarter notes, often with dotted rhythms. The piano accompaniment is primarily chords, many of which are marked 'C0'. The score is divided into systems by a large horizontal brace at the top. There are several instances of slurs and fermatas across the systems. The piece concludes with a final chord in the A. 2 part.



**A**

**Full. Glorious**

CLAP ON 3rd BEAT

The musical score consists of four vocal parts (S. 1, S. 2, A. 1, A. 2) and piano accompaniment. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The score begins at measure 15. The vocal parts are written in treble clef. The piano accompaniment is written in bass clef. The lyrics are: "Co - VI", "Fei", and "Re Fe". The dynamics are: *ff* full **\*\*** for the vocal entries, and *pp* for the piano accompaniment. There are accents (^) and slurs (>) throughout the score. An annotation "CLAP ON 3rd BEAT" with an arrow points to the third beat of the first measure.

21

S. 1 *ppp* **B**

S. 2 *ppp*

A. 1 *ppp*

A. 2 *ppp*

*mp with urgency*

Co Co Co Co VI Fe Fe.

25

S. 1

S. 2

A. 1

A. 2

The musical score consists of four staves, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The notation includes various musical symbols and dynamics:

- S. 1:** Contains rests throughout the piece.
- S. 2:** Features a melodic line starting with a rest, followed by notes with accents (>). It includes a triplet of eighth notes marked *mp* *sweetly* and a glissando marked *gliss.*. The notes are labeled with *Co* and *O!*.
- A. 1:** Starts with a *p* dynamic and a glissando. It then features a series of notes with accents (>) and a *mf* dynamic. The notes are labeled with *Co*, *Fe Co Fe*, *Fe Co*, *Fe*, and *Fe Co Fe*.
- A. 2:** Features a melodic line with accents (^) and a *p* dynamic. The notes are labeled with *Co Co Co Co Co VI Fe Fe.*, *Co Co Co Co Co*, *VI Fe Fe*, and *Co Co Co Co Co VI Fe Fe.*

28

*mp molto sost.*

S. 1  
I like to

S. 2  
O! Co O!

A. 1  
*mf*  
Fe Co Fe Fe Co Fe Fe Co Fe Fe Co Fe  
*p*  
Co *gliss.*

A. 2  
Co Co Co Co VI Fe Fe. Co Co Co Co VI Fe Fe

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is for measure 28 and features four vocal parts. Soprano 1 (S. 1) has a melodic line with lyrics 'I like to'. Soprano 2 (S. 2) has lyrics 'O! Co O!' and includes a triplet of notes. Alto 1 (A. 1) and Alto 2 (A. 2) have more rhythmic parts with lyrics 'Co Co Co Co VI Fe Fe. Co Co Co Co VI Fe Fe'. The score includes various musical notations: glissandi (gliss.) for S. 2 and A. 1; accents (>) for A. 1; dynamics (mp, mf, p) for A. 1 and A. 2; and a triplet (3) for S. 2. The tempo/mood is marked 'mp molto sost.'.



S. 1 30

I like to..

I like to

**ff** *Whispered with intent* **pp** **mf**

S. 2

*gliss.*

**ff** *Whispered with intent* **pp**

VI Fe VI

A. 1

*gliss.*

**mf** *Whispered with intent* **pp**

VI Fe VI

A. 2

**ff** *Whispered with intent* **pp**

Co Co Co Co Co Co Co

VI Fe VI



32

S. 1  
Co VI Fe Co VI Fe I like to Co

S. 2  
*(pp)* Fe Fe Fe Fe Fe Fe Fe Fe Fe Fe

A. 1  
*(pitched whisper)* Fe Co Fe Fe Co Fe Fe Co Fe Fe Co Fe Fe Co Fe Fe Co Fe Fe Co Fe Fe Co Fe Fe Co Fe

A. 2  
*(pp)* Fe Fe Fe Fe Fe Fe Fe Fe Fe Fe



37 **D** Tempo

S. 1 *ff* VI

S. 2 *p random!* Co Co Fe Fe Co Co Fe Fe Co Co Fe Fe Co Co Fe Fe Co Co Fe Fe Co Co Fe Fe

A. 1 *ff* VI

A. 2 *ff* VI

Quasi recit. Lots of puzzled faces! (♩ = 60 ca)

With pulse but slowly till end...

Angry whisper

***ff*** ten ***p*** *sweetly*

Musical score for four voices (S. 1, S. 2, A. 1, A. 2) with lyrics and performance instructions. The score is in 6/8 time and consists of four systems. The first system is marked with a '41' at the top right. The lyrics are: S. 1: Co? ten Co - VI-fe -; S. 2: VI Fe Fe?; A. 1: Co? Oh; A. 2: Fe Fe? Oh. Performance instructions include *mp* - (spoken) for the vocal lines, *pp* for the piano accompaniment, and *ff* ten *p* *sweetly* for the final section. The piano accompaniment features a steady pulse in the right hand and a melodic line in the left hand.

41

S. 1

S. 2

A. 1

A. 2

*mp* - (spoken)

*mp* - (spoken)

*mp* - (spoken)

*mp* - (spoken)

Co?

VI Fe Fe?

Co?

Fe Fe?

Oh

Oh

Oh

Oh

*pp*

*pp*

*pp*

*pp*

***ff*** ten ***p*** *sweetly*

Co? ten Co - VI-fe -

45

S. 1  
fe. Co - Vi fe - fe.  
*pppp but huge*  
Co - fe.

S. 2  
*pppp but huge*  
Co - fe.

A. 1  
*pppp but huge*  
Co - fe.

A. 2  
*pppp but huge*  
Co - fe.

### iii. - Know my name

Benjamin Ellin, 2019

The entries in the soli chorus part can be staggered if the numbers allow. Therefore, by the last few phrases, the full force of the chorus is present.

Like a procession of purpose.  $\text{♩} = 50$

*pppp*

*p*

A

(Free vowels and use music as a guide - quasi improv.)

The musical score is written for six voices: Soprano Solo, Soprano 1, Soprano 2, Alto Solo, Alto 1, and Alto 2. The time signature is 4/4. The Soprano Solo part begins with a melodic line starting on a whole note G4, moving to A4, B4, and C5, then descending. The other voices enter in a staggered fashion, each with a similar melodic line. The lyrics are: "Know her name." The score includes dynamic markings: *pppp* for the Soprano Solo, *p* for the other voices, and *pp* for the Alto 1 and Alto 2 parts. There are also performance instructions: "(Free vowels and use music as a guide - quasi improv.)" and "Know her name." The score is arranged in a system with six staves.

S. Solo

8 *poco a poco cresc.* 3

S. 1

S. 2

Know \_\_\_\_\_ her name. Know her name.

A. Solo

*p* *poco a poco cresc.* 3

A. 1

Know \_\_\_\_\_ her name. Know her name.

A. 2

Know \_\_\_\_\_ her name. Know her name.



**B**

S. Solo *mf* *ff* *p* *ff* *ff*

**C**

*ff* *ff* *ff*

S. 1

*mf* *ff* *ff*

Aw. \_\_\_\_\_

Know my \_\_\_\_\_ name..

S. 2

*mf* *ff* *p* *ff* *ff*

Aw. \_\_\_\_\_

Know my \_\_\_\_\_ name..

A. Solo

*mf* *ff* *ff*

Aw. \_\_\_\_\_

Know my \_\_\_\_\_ name..

A. 1

*mf* *ff* *ff*

Aw. \_\_\_\_\_

Know my \_\_\_\_\_ name..

A. 2

*mf* *ff* *ff*

Aw. \_\_\_\_\_

Know my \_\_\_\_\_ name..

S. Solo

18

Know my name.

S. 1

Know my name.

S. 2

Know my name.

A. Solo

Know my name.

A. 1

Know my name.

A. 2

Know my name.

22

S. Solo

S. 1

S. 2

A. Solo

A. 1

A. 2

My name.

My name.

My name.

My name.

My name.