

Elaine Hagenberg
MUSIC

You Do Not Walk Alone

"May you see God's light on the path ahead
when the road you walk is dark.
May you always hear,
even in your hour of sorrow,
the gentle singing of the lark.
When times are hard
may hardness never turn
your heart to stone,
May you always remember
when the shadows fall—
You do not walk alone."



Irish Blessings

In the Irish tradition, blessings are often bestowed as heartfelt wishes for one's well-being and used for wedding ceremonies, family gatherings, and other special occasions. Oftentimes, these blessings seek to turn a difficult situation into a positive one.

Though life may bring uncertainty, the author of this traditional Irish blessing reminds us "when the shadows fall, you do not walk alone."

About Elaine

Elaine Hagenberg's music "soars with eloquence and ingenuity" (ACDA Choral Journal). Her compositions are performed worldwide and frequently featured at distinguished international concert halls from Australia to South America and throughout Europe.

In addition to composing full-time, Elaine actively engages in bringing her music to life as the guest artist and featured clinician for professional conferences and festivals both in the U.S. and abroad as a composer, conductor, and accompanist of her work. Elaine has music in print with various publishers and publishes her concert music independently through Elaine Hagenberg Music.

Elaine lives in Iowa with her husband and four children and enjoys being in nature, traveling, gardening, and sipping homemade cappuccinos.



INSPIRATION

I'm often asked: "What is the inspiration behind your compositions?"

As a choral composer, my inspiration always begins with poetry. The words that tend to resonate personally often include themes that are both meaningful to me and unite us through shared experiences. You will often hear uplifting messages of hope, imagery of nature, and elements of my faith. As I weave these components together, my aim is to add yet another layer of beauty to the text so we can gain a deeper understanding of its message of hope and share that hope with others.

In "You Do Not Walk Alone," voices and piano hint at Celtic musical elements with a melody that ascends and descends over the Irish hillside, as flecks of traditional folk rhythms delicately grace the scene. As the piece gradually builds, the voices swell together, concluding with solace in a time of uncertainty.



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. As you read this Irish blessing, which words or phrases resonate with you personally and why?
2. This piece is intentionally designed to have Irish folk influences. What musical elements make you think of Ireland?
3. How is the melody used to support the text? Is it ascending? Descending? Are there higher or lower pitches to support certain ideas? Leaps or steps? See examples in measures 19–20 and 35–36.
4. How does the piece highlight certain words through the rhythm? How do downbeats support the important words in each phrase?
5. How does the harmony support the text? Are there any surprising harmonic moments?
6. How are dynamics used to support the main ideas?
7. The form of this piece is strophic (verse one, verse two, verse three). How does musical material change each time beginning in measure 8, 42, and 84? Notice the texture (how many voices are singing), who has the melody, and key signatures.
8. How does the piano accompaniment support the main ideas of this piece as well as the vocal lines?
9. In a concert, what would you hope an audience would feel after your performance?
10. What additional observations do you have about this piece?



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