

SSA(A) Women's Choir  
String Quartet

*Commissioned by the Radcliffe Choral Society*

# A Sense of Decency

Katherine Pukinskis

*Text excerpted from a dissent  
written by*

*Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court*

I. Monumental, Clear, and Bold

II. Inherent Differences

2020

## Text

### I. Monumental, Clear, and Bold

Monumental, clear, and bold.

By day the cross looms larger to honor local soldiers who lost their lives, to honor the sacrifices made in all wars by all veterans demands neutrality between religion and non religion.

A cross is not suitable to honor those of other faiths who died defending their nation. They who served us in life should be honored, as they would have wished, in death... Pay[ing] equal respect to all who perished in the service of our country. However... individuals worship, they will count as full and equal American citizens.

### II. Inherent Differences

When a law denies to women, simply because they are women,  
Then the law denies full citizenship stature  
    Equal opportunity to aspire  
    To achieve,  
    Participate in and contribute to society.

When a government denies to women, based on their individual talents and capacities,  
It denies extraordinary opportunities,  
    It denies training and leadership,  
The government must do more than favor one gender.

We have come to appreciate inherent differences.  
Our inherent differences remain cause for celebration.

## Performance Notes

### General

- ♪ = ♪ unless otherwise indicated.
- Dotted slur markings indicate a marking of a larger phrase, and may be executed in more than one breath or bow change. Separate the gestures as indicated, but consider the overarching gesture of the phrase as shown by the dotted slur marking.
- Dynamic markings may need to be adjusted to achieve balance among the ensemble, depending on size of the choir and performance space.
- In m. 26 of "Monumental, Clear, and Bold," the string quartet ONLY repeats that measure while the boxed notation in the choir continues. Proceed *tutti* to m. 27.
- Separate scores are formatted for the choir and the string quartet. The choral score omits some directions and phrase articulations from the string quartet part in order to save space and provide a cleaner page; the same holds for the string quartet score. The full score has all notes and articulations for every part.

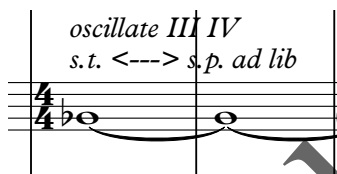
### Choir

- The Alto part is not always split in two; when only one line is singing, all altos should sing the Alto line. The split is sometimes placed on a separate staff line for ease of reading (I, mm. 8-10 and other polyphonic textures), or notated on the same staff (II, mm. 27-29) in more homophonic textures. An arrow on the staff (ex. II, mm. 44-45) will indicate when Alto 2 should leave the Alto part and shift to the designated Alto 2 line.

- Material in boxed notation (“Monumental, Clear, and Bold,” ex, m. 4) should be sung individually by voices in the section. Ad lib entrances with some variation in tempo, but perform the material in the box “in time” with the tempo you’ve chosen. Proceed (a tempo, as indicated by the conductor) when everyone has sung through the boxed notation. Note: if singers are uncomfortable singing alone, they can pair up with a person standing next to them and sing together, but in groups no larger than two.
- A2: I, 29-32: sing “oh” or “hm” depending on balance with the ensemble. If there are singers who are capable of the low cue notes, they should sing “oh.”
- Text to hum: (ex. I, mm. 27-29) in the space between the sung text and “ng\*” notated under a pitch, gradually change from the vowel of the word to the “ng” sound. This change can begin when “...” is notated as text, and should be done individually, not as a choir.

### String Quartet

- Pont*, *sord*, *pizz*, and harmonics are notated as resultant sound and will need adjustment to achieve the specified volume.
- Material in boxed notation (“Monumental, Clear, and Bold,” Vln 1 in m. 5, Vln 2 in m. 22) should be played and repeated; ad lib entrances with some variation in tempo, but perform the material in the box “in time” with the tempo you’ve chosen. Proceed a tempo, as indicated by the conductor.



- indicates an ad lib oscillation, alternating between two adjacent strings that can achieve the notated pitch. Motion between strings should occur at the discretion of the performer, within the scope and feel of the moment in the piece. The desired effect is a slow bubbling, or the beating of two frequencies tuned “just so.”
- Sul ponticello* is abbreviated as “s.p.” and *sul tasto* is abbreviated as “s.t.,” all markings should be *molto*. These techniques extend until you see “ord.” and are also indicated with a bracket:



- When a dotted line precedes a “s.p.” “s.t.” or “ord.” occurs, the transition should be gradual in accordance with the dotted line. If there is no dotted line, the shift should be sudden.
- Harmonics notated all sound 16va; if an alternate fingering is more comfortable or more easily achieved, please use what works best.

### **Composer's Note:**

I am moved by Justice Ginsburg's unflappable commitment to her responsibilities as a member of the Supreme Court of the United States. I am more so moved by her writing in opinions and dissents, where she balances her intense knowledge with an equally intense and biting writing style, so calmly and fully supporting or dismantling the decisions handed down by the Court.

Composition—and art in general—has the capacity to be inherently political, though some works can be more overt in their statements than others. This text is excerpted and crafted from one opinion of the Supreme Court and one dissent; first, Ginsburg's dissent against a ruling that allowed a large cross serving as a WWI monument to stay on state land (*American Legion vs. American Humanist Association* 2019, No. 17-1717). The second movement excerpts from one of Ginsburg's earliest written opinions as an Associate Justice, in the case against the Virginia Military Institute's previously established practice of accepting and enrolling only men in their programs (*United States vs. Virginia* 1996, No. 94-1941). While I have very strong opinions of my own about how each case turned out, I did my best to capture, instead, excerpts of Justice Ginsburg's text that speak to decency, courtesy, and access to opportunity in a broader sense.

Duration: 10 minutes  
Premiere: 4 April 2020  
Radcliffe Choral Society  
and Parker String Quartet

Sanders Theatre  
Harvard University  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Commissioned by the Radcliffe Choral Society

# A Sense of Decency

## I. Monumental, Clear, and Bold

K. Pukinskis

Voices enter individually, ad lib entrances, as notated, with varying tempi. Proceed (in time) when everyone has sung through the boxed notation.

**Reverent** ♩ = 60

The score is for a choral and instrumental piece. It features five vocal parts: Soprano 1, Mezzo-Soprano, Alto 1, Alto 2, and Tenor 1. The instrumental parts include Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The music is in 4/4 time and begins with a tempo marking of 'Reverent' and a metronome marking of 60. The vocal parts enter individually, with the Soprano 1 part having a boxed notation for the lyrics 'Mo - nu - men - tal, clear and bold,'. The instrumental parts include dynamic markings such as *mp* and *p*, and performance instructions like *s.t. <---> s.p. ad lib* and *oscillate III IV s.t. <---> s.p. ad lib*. A large watermark 'FOR DONOT PRINT' is overlaid on the score.

Soprano 1

Mezzo-Soprano

Alto

Alto 2

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

*mf*

Mo - nu - men - tal, clear and bold,

*mp*

*p*

*s.t. <---> s.p. ad lib*

*oscillate III IV s.t. <---> s.p. ad lib*

*s.t. <---> s.p. ad lib*

*mp*

*mp*

*mp*

*mp*

7

*mp* *mf*

S  
By day the cross looms lar - ger.

M-S  
*mf* *pp*  
Mo - nu-men-tal, clear and bold,

A  
*mp* *mf*  
By day the cross looms lar - ger.

A2  
*mp* *mf* *pp*  
By day the cross looms lar - ger.

Vln. I  
*mp* *p* *mp* *p* *n* *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf*  
(s.t. <---> s.p. ad lib)

Vln. II  
*n* *ord.* *p* *mf*  
(oscillate III IV  
s.t. <---> s.p. ad lib)

Vla.  
*n* *ord.* *p* *mf*  
(s.t. <---> s.p. ad lib)

Vc.  
*n* *ord.* *p* *mf*

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13

S *mp* *p* *mp* *p*  
 To ho- nor, \_\_\_\_\_ To ho nor, \_\_\_\_\_

M-S *mp* *mf*  
 Lo - cal sol-diers who lost their lives \_\_\_\_\_ The sa - cri

A *mp* *p* *mp* *p*  
 To ho- nor, \_\_\_\_\_ To ho nor, \_\_\_\_\_

A2 *p*  
 ho nor, \_\_\_\_\_

Vln. I **Pulled taut, resistant**  
*sub. p* *mp* *mf* *sub. mp*

Vln. II *p* *p sempre*

Vla. *sub. p* *mp* *mf* *mp*

Vc. *sub. p* *mp* *(sempre mp)* *p*

*sord.*

20

*mp* (no decresc.) *p*

S To ho- nor, \_\_\_\_\_ To

M-S fi - ces, Made in all wars \_\_\_\_\_ By all ve- te - rans \_\_\_\_\_

A *mf* Made in all wars \_\_\_\_\_ By all

A2 *mp* (no decresc.) To ho- nor, \_\_\_\_\_ To

Vln. I *sub p* *sub p* *mp*

Vln. II *senza sord.* *mp*

Vla. *mf* *mp*

Vc. *mf* *mp*

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*DO NOT PRINT*



**Strong, insistent**

*f*

S  
ho - nor, \_\_\_\_\_ To ho - nor, \_\_\_\_\_

M-S  
\_\_\_\_\_ *mf* \_\_\_\_\_ *f* It de - mands neu - tra - li -

A  
ve - te rans \_\_\_\_\_ *f* It de - mands neu - tra - li - ty \_\_\_\_\_

A2  
ho - nor, \_\_\_\_\_ To ho - nor, ...

*repeat until A1 finishes* **Strong, insistent**

Vln. I  
\_\_\_\_\_ *f* \_\_\_\_\_

Vln. II  
\_\_\_\_\_ *mf* \_\_\_\_\_ *f* \_\_\_\_\_

Vla.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *f* \_\_\_\_\_ *p* \_\_\_\_\_

Vc.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *f* \_\_\_\_\_ *p* \_\_\_\_\_

poco rall. . . . . ♩ = 60  
a tempo

29

S *mp* *mf* *n*  
ng\* be tween re - li - gion and non - re - li gion.

M-S *mf* *n*  
ty be tween re - li - gion and non - re - li gion.

A *mf* *n*  
be tween re - li - gion and non - re - li gion.

A2  
ng\* oh/hm

Vln. I *mp* *s.p.*

Vln. II *mp* *p* < > *sim.* *n*  
unfolding from Vla

Vla. *oscillate III IV*  
*s.t. <---> s.p. ad lib*  
*p* *mp* < > < > *sim.*

Vc. *pizz* *arco*  
*mf*

Composed, unified

33

S *mf*  
A cross is not suit-a ble\_ to ho-nor

M-S *mf*  
A cross is not suit-a ble\_

A

A2

Composed, unified

Vln. I *ord.* unfolding from Vla/Vln *sord.* *mp*

Vln. II *mf* *oscillate I II* *s.t. <---> s.p. ad lib*

Vla. *s.p.* *ord.* *mp*

Vc. *stoic (arco)* *mf*

38

S those of o-ther faiths, those of o-ther faiths who died de fen-ding their

M-S to ho - nor, mm oh

A mm, oh

Vln. I *mf* (senza sord.)

Vln. II *p* *mf*

Vla. *mf* *sord.*

Vc.

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## II. Inherent Differences

With a relaxed ease of motion  
♩ = 44

Soprano 1

Mezzo-Soprano

Alto

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

*p* *mp* *n*

*p* *mp* (*sempre mp*) *s.p.*

*p* *mp*

poco rall. . . . .

poco accel. . . . .

7

S

M-S

A

When a law de-

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

ord.

*p* *mf* *pp* *mp*

*p* *mf* *n* *p* *mp*

13  $\text{♩} = 52$   
*mf*

S  
nies to wo- men,— sim- ply be- cause they are wo men, Then the law de-

M-S  
nies to wo- men,— sim- ply be- cause they are wo men, Then the law de-

A  
*mf*  
Then the law de-

Vln. I  
 $\text{♩} = 52$   
*mf*

Vln. II  
*mf*

Vla.  
*mp* *mf* *pizz* (*arco*)

Vc.  
*mf* *pizz*

*poco accel.* ..... *a tempo*

The musical score is arranged in five systems. The first system contains the vocal parts: Soprano (S), Mezzo-Soprano (M-S), and Alto (A). The second system contains the instrumental parts: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.).

**Vocal Parts:**

- Soprano (S):** Melody line with lyrics: "nies, de - nies, de - - - nies,". It features a long note with a fermata and a dynamic marking of *f*.
- Mezzo-Soprano (M-S):** Melody line with lyrics: "nies, de - nies, de - nies, full ci - ti - zen - ship". It includes a dynamic marking of *f*.
- Alto (A):** Melody line with lyrics: "nies, de - nies, de - nies, full ci - ti - zen - ship". It includes a dynamic marking of *f*.

**Instrumental Parts:**

- Violin I (Vln. I):** Features a *pizz* (pizzicato) section followed by an *arco* (arco) section. It has a dynamic marking of *f*.
- Violin II (Vln. II):** Features an *arco* section with a dynamic marking of *f*.
- Viola (Vla.):** Features an *arco* section with a dynamic marking of *f*.
- Violoncello (Vc.):** Features an *arco* section with a dynamic marking of *f*.

The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, fermatas, and dynamic markings. A large watermark "For Personal Use Only" is overlaid diagonally across the page.



22

S  
sta - ture, e - qual op - por - tu - ni - ty to a - spire, *mp*

M-S  
sta - ture, e - qual op - por - tu - ni - ty to a - spire, *mp*

A  
full sta - ture, e - qual op - por - tu - ni - ty *mf* *mp*

Vln. I  
like a large inhale  
*p* *f* *mp*

Vln. II  
*p* *f* *mp*

Vla.  
*p* *f* *mp*

Vc.  
*p* *pizz* *arco* *mf*

27 *mf*

S  
a - chieve, par - ti - ci - pate in, —

M-S  
*mf*  
a - chieve, par - ti - ci - pate in, — and con - tri - bute to so - ci - e ty. —

A  
*mf*  
to a - chieve, — par - ti - ci - pate in, — par - ti - ci - pate, so -

Vln. I  
*mp* *mf* *p*

Vln. II  
*mp* *mf* *p* *pizz* *mp*

Vla.  
*mp* *mf* *p* *pizz* *mp*

Vc.  
*mp* *mf* *p*

32 *p* *mp* *poco rall.* *pp*

S  
to so - ci - e - ty.

M-S *pp* *mf*  
so - ci - e - ty, hm mm

A  
ci - e - ty, hm ...ci - e - ty, hm mm

Vln. I *pizz* *mp* *poco rall.*

Vln. II *arco* *s.p.* *ord.* *mf*

Vla. *mp*

Vc. *mf*

Settled back in

(♩ = <48) ♩ = 52

37

S *mp*  
When a go-vern ment\_ de-nies to

M-S *pp* *mp*  
When a go-vern ment\_ de-nies to

A *pp*

Settled back in

(♩ = <48) ♩ = 52

Vln. I *arco* *mp*

Vln. II *p*

Vla.

Vc. *pizz* *mp*

41

*mf*

S  
wo - men, \_\_\_\_\_ based on their ta-lents and ca - pa-ci ties, \_\_\_\_\_ (de -

*mf*

M-S  
wo - men, \_\_\_\_\_ based on their ta-lents and ca - pa-ci ties, \_\_\_\_\_ (de -

*mf*

A  
in - di - vi - du - al

*s.p.*

Vln. I  
*f*

Vln. II  
*f* — *mf*

Vla.  
*mf*  
*f* — *mf*  
*arco*

Vc.  
*mf*  
*arco*  
*(mf)*

44

**Increasingly insistent**

S  
nies to wo - men,) It de- nies, \_\_\_\_\_

M-S  
nies to wo - men,) e - xtraor-di-na - ry op - por

A  
ta-lents and ca-pa-ci-ties, e - xtraor-di-na - ry op - por

A2  
It de- nies, \_\_\_\_\_

Vln. I  
*ord.*  
*p* *mf*

Vln. II  
*p* *mf*

Vla.  
*pizz*  
*mp* *mf* *mp* *(mf)*

Vc.  
*pizz*  
*mp* *mf* *mp* *(mf)*