Note to the reader:

As the 10 year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina approached, I slowly awoke to the rich collection of art music created in response to the tragedy that encompassed the horror, despair, pain, grief, love, and hope left in the wake of this national tragedy. My original intention was to compile a bibliography of these compositions for publication on the 10 year anniversary. However, as work on the project progressed I grew increasingly uncomfortable with the strictures of the intended journal’s style guide and with the idea of placing this information behind a paywall. Unable at the time to provide myself with a solution, the project lay fallow.

The coincidence of the strongest hurricane on record to make landfall along the Louisiana shoreline occurring on the 15 year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina is pressing me to pick this project up once more. Rather than hold the information back another few years while I continue to build the bibliography, it seems prudent to share the work from 5 years ago more or less in its original form as the pressure of time at this moment far outweighs the inconvenience of format. What follows is a lightly edited copy of the draft article written in 2015. I ask readers to bear in mind that the following is not a polished draft and as such to be generous with your judgement of writing style and the inevitable typographical errors.

Sincerely,

-lisa k. Hooper
August 29, 2020

Introduction

August 2015, marked the ten year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. Although a comparatively weak but fast-moving category 3 hurricane by the time it made landfall along the Gulf Coast, weakened natural defenses along the shoreline and an aging levee system quickly made Hurricane Katrina one of the most memorable disasters in recent American memory.
nearly a million residents of the greater New Orleans area were able to safely evacuate, another estimated 100,000 residents who had no access to transportation were trapped in the city when the levees broke. Across the entire Gulf South region, 1,833 lives were lost, approximately 300,000 homes were destroyed, and a land area roughly equivalent in size to the United Kingdom was severely damaged.¹ What ensued was a harrowing story of death, survival, heroism, volunteerism, renewal, and something that, for some, resembles rebirth. People around the world were deeply affected by the human story of Hurricane Katrina, and the musical word was not exempt. Benefit concerts held across the country raised millions of dollars for the recovery process, and songwriters and composers alike composed new works to memorialize the tragedy and the triumph of the human spirit.²

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While the entire popular and classical corpus of Katrina works deserves attention, many songs across the popular music spectrum are readily available online and on CD, whereas only a portion of the classical works have been published and even fewer recorded.³ This article, then, seeks to bring to light the musical art pieces composed over the past ten years in response to Hurricane Katrina.

Methodology

The overriding goal of this project was to identify as many published and unpublished works as possible that were composed in response to Hurricane Katrina. This required a varied approach to locating appropriate titles. Methods included:

- Reaching out via Facebook and Twitter over a one month period to friends, librarians, musicians, and various organizations known for sponsoring new music such as the American Composers Alliance and the New Orleans-based new music groups Versipel Collective and FOCI Arts;

² A few notable benefit pop concerts include: From the Big Apple to the Big Easy at Madison Square Garden; Jazz at Lincoln Center’s Higher Ground Hurricane Relief Benefit Concert; and MTV’s ReAct Now Music and Relief Benefit Concert. The Seattle Symphony, the New York Philharmonic, Elgin Symphony in Chicago, the San Jose Symphonic Choir, the New World Symphony, the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, and many others all also held benefit concerts for Katrina relief.
³ 75% of the works listed here have been published. Of these, only the fourth movement of one work is available, three are self-published, two are only available as rental scores, and one is out of print.
● Searching the catalog of the American Composers Alliance with keywords such as “New Orleans” flood, “Hurricane Katrina,” etc.;
● Scouring WorldCat for scores using the same keywords listed above;
● Searching the catalogs of each music publisher listed in the Music Publishers Association directory for which there was a link to a functional website;
● Reaching out with in person conversation and through email to composers in the Greater New Orleans area and on the faculties of universities and colleges across Louisiana;
● Conducting web searches with Google using various combinations of the keywords: composer, Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, and music.

These efforts resulted in the identification of forty-four unique works. Although each method yielded significant results with minimal overlap, there are undoubtedly still more Katrina works that remain to be identified. The following bibliography, arranged alphabetically by composer, provides basic bibliographic information for each piece including composer, title, publisher (where appropriate), date of composition or publication, publisher number (as appropriate), instrumentation, a brief descriptive note about the work, and one or more links to additional information.

Bibliography

   Publ. No. P1295
   Instrumentation: SATB chorus
   Notes: Dedicated to the victims of Hurricane Katrina, this choral piece is a musical setting of texts discovered on a basement wall in Cologne following WWII. At the heart of this piece is the “strength of optimism” against all obstacles.
   More information: http://www.pavanepublishing.com/Site/38/


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4 I wish to give my sincere thanks to Grace Byrne, a student employee of the Music & Media Center at Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, who was an invaluable help in completing this rather tedious task.

Publ. No. n/a

Instrumentation: Orchestra and electronics

Notes: This is a four-movement tone poem exploring the various states of water. The fourth movement, “Crescent City,” gains its inspiration from Hurricane Katrina, as it “examines the destructive force as water grows from the small-scale to the enormous…”


Publ. No. G-8014

Instrumentation: SATB with solo alto voice

Notes: Based on Psalm 77, this work was composed with a number of natural and man-made disasters in mind, including 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, and the Fukushima power plant explosion.


Publ. No. n/a

Instrumentation: Orchestra, tabla, acoustic bass, electric bass, piano, saxophone
Notes: This work began as the sound track to Spike Lee’s HBO documentary *When the Levee Broke*. However, only a small portion of this 13-movement piece may be heard in the film. Recorded on Blue Note Records.

More Information:

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/08/09/AR2007080900359.html and
http://terenceblanchard.com/discography/a-tale-of-gods-will-a-requiem-for-katrina


   Publ. No. 25019
   
   Instrumentation: String orchestra or full orchestra
   
   Notes: Brubaker’s arrangement of Brahms’s Requiem, originally for organ and chorus, is dedicated to the victims and survivors of Hurricane Katrina.

   More Information: http://www.jwpepper.com/Motet/10015083.item#.VSqa2_nF8kw


   Publ. No. n/a
   
   Instrumentation: Large wind ensemble
   
   Notes: This work was premiered in 2009 by the Hartt Wind Ensemble at the University of Hartford. Described as a lament for New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina, this work uses the melody from the jazz standard “Do You Know What it Means to Miss New Orleans?” as a cantus firmus.


   Publ. No. n/a
Instrumentation: voice, acoustic guitars (3), drums

Notes: This song became the state song for the Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita recovery effort with House Bill No. 796, signed on June 2, 2006. Although belonging to the popular idiom, this song is included here in recognition of its official status as a state song.

More Information:
http://www.netstate.com/states/symb/songs/la_come_back_to_louisiana.htm

Publ. No. n/a

Instrumentation: Flute choir and optional drum set

Notes: This work celebrates the rebuilding and spirit of New Orleans, taking listeners through the destroyed and deserted streets before erupting in the joyous ethos of a New Orleans second line.

More Information:

Publ. No. 22010

Instrumentation: Solo bass clarinet

Notes: Better known locally by its alternative title Adagio Appassionata[sic]: New Orleans, August 29, 2005, this work is dedicated to and premiered by New Orleans-based clarinetist John Reeks. According to musicians who have worked with Mr. Reeks, this piece is a reflection on the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

More Information:
https://lpomusic.com/online/default.asp?doWork::WScontent::loadArticle=Load
   Publ. No. X 624508
   Instrumentation: Alto saxophone and drum set
   Notes: This seven-movement piece was composed for and dedicated to the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

   Publ. No. n/a
   Instrumentation: Vibraphone
   Notes: This four-mallet solo work was composed in memory of those who were unable to evacuate the city and could not be saved.

   Publ. No. GAN22
   Instrumentation: Piano and orchestra
   Notes: This work was commissioned Anthony Fiumara and the Amsterdam-based Orkest de Volharding. About the same time Gann received this request, he watched Spike
Lee’s documentary *When the Levee Broke*, which, in part, follows New Orleans officials to Amsterdam where they inspected the dam system. With the title *Sunken City*, Gann sought to “draw a link between Amsterdam and New Orleans – though, hopefully, never with similarly catastrophic connotations.”


   
   Publ. No. GOO 42
   
   Instrumentation: 10 trombones, viola, 2 clarinets, piano, and percussion
   
   Notes: Written in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, this work draws upon stylistically diverse compositional tropes and techniques, including Mahler, Javanese music, and New Orleans second line brass bands.
   

   
   Publ. No. CM 67
   
   Instrumentation: 2 flutes, oboe, cello, piano, and claves
   
   Notes: This is a programmatic work depicting Hurricane Katrina’s path over New Orleans and is dedicated to the composer’s father, who was in New Orleans at the time.
   

   
   Publ. No. n/a
   
   Instrumentation: Chorus and orchestra
Notes: This work was commissioned and premiered by the Houston Choral Society in 2008. “… the music tells of the struggles and plight of the people of New Orleans who were evacuated from the Superdome in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and arrived in Houston to find compassion and hope.”

More Information:
http://www.odu.edu/news/news-archive/2008/05/HailstorksHurricaneKa_10003#.VSnhQPnF8kw

   Publ. No. n/a
   Instrumentation: 5 singers and 11 unspecified instruments
   Notes: This song-cycle is one of the most widely recognized compositions written in response to Hurricane Katrina. Written for 11 instruments and 5 singers, the piece incorporates text that emerged from New Orleans in the weeks immediately following the storm.

   Publ. No. n/a
   Instrumentation: Double chorus and orchestra
   Notes: This work was commissioned by the Pacific Chorale and premiered in October 2006 by the Pacific Chorale and Pacific Symphony.
   http://jakeheggie.com/seeking-higher-ground-2006/ and

Publ. No. BQ351
Instrumentation: Brass quintet
Notes: This three-movement work is dedicated to the “enduring spirit” of the music and musicians of New Orleans.

Publ. No. 14860 (4th movement only via Alan Publications)
Instrumentation: Concert band
Notes: Only the 4th movement, “Play!” is published by C. Alan Publications. The fourth movement is winner of the 2007 Claude T. Smith Memorial Band Composition Contest.
More Information: http://carlholmquist.com/Portfolio.html

Publ. No. CH1281
Instrumentation: SATB chorus
Notes: This work, written in honor of the victims of Hurricane Katrina, is now out of print.

Publ. No. 15/2711R-3
Instrumentation: SATB chorus and piano with optional bass and handheld percussion
Notes: This work, commissioned by the San Ramon Valley High School Choirs of Danville, California, celebrates the example of hope and volunteerism set by students of San Ramon Valley High School who volunteered in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina.


   Publ. No. n/a
   Instrumentation: unknown
   Notes: Scenes from *Crescent City* were premiered in 2006 by New York City Opera VOX.

   Publ. No. n/a
   Instrumentation: Voice and piano
   Notes: Musical theater style song. The earliest recorded performance of this song was on December 2009 at the Hurricane Katrina victims’ benefit “We are the Song 2: After the Storm” at Joe’s Pub.

   Publ. No. n/a
   Instrumentation: Choir, orchestra, trumpet, drums, piano, organ, bass, narrator
   Notes: Premiered in New Orleans at the Trinity Episcopal Church on August 24, 2013.
   Publ. No. HL08551883
   Instrumentation: SAB or SA
   Notes: This choral work celebrates the “spirit of volunteerism” and pays tribute to those affected by Hurricane Katrina.
   More Information: [http://www.jwpepper.com/Reach-Out/10010571.item#.VSGxr_nF8kw](http://www.jwpepper.com/Reach-Out/10010571.item#.VSGxr_nF8kw)

   Publ. No. n/a
   Instrumentation: Guitar
   Notes: As Hurricane Katrina struck the Mississippi Gulf Coast, then President Bush received a guitar while visiting a naval base. Shortly after, a series of pictures emerged showing Bush playing the guitar; this work’s musical basis is the series of chords that appear in the pictures.

   Publ. No. NOV956703
   Instrumentation: SATB chorus
   Notes: Commissioned by St. John’s College, Cambridge, this work examines the need for guidance from beyond home communities in times of need. An inflection of New Orleans blues throughout the work memorializes the losses and resiliency following Hurricane Katrina.

   Publ. No. n/a
Orchestration: Orchestra and youth choir

Notes: Hurricane Katrina was the primary inspiration behind the story of this dramatic setting which follows the lives of a group of children who lost their homes and families in a great storm. This work was premiered at the 2007 Proms.

More Information:  
http://www.standard.co.uk/goingout/music/proms-takes-inspiration-from-hurricane-katrina-7206662.html

   Publ. No. C 5465
   Instrumentation: SATB
   Notes: This gospel piece, which blends original text and music with the gospel standard “Precious Lord Take My Hand,” celebrates the extraordinary efforts of Hurricane Katrina rescue workers.
   More Information: http://www.jwpepper.com/Reach-Out/10010571.item#.VSGxr_nF8kw

   Publ. No. n/a
   Instrumentation: Voices and orchestra
   More Information:  

   Publ. No. n/a
   Instrumentation: For ensemble and voices of the homeless (electronics), flute (piccolo/alto), clarinet (bass clarinet), violin, cello, piano, percussion
Notes: This three-movement piece, which more broadly explores the topic of homelessness, includes a movement based on the voice of an older woman displaced by Hurricane Katrina. Commissioned by the Fromm Foundation at Harvard University. Premiered in February 2008 at Merkin Hall (NYC) by the New York Music Ensemble. Recorded on Albany, Troy 1216

More Information: http://www.morrisrosenzweig.com/program_notes.html#roughsleepers

   Publ. No. 04002431
   Instrumentation: Concert band
   Notes: This work memorializes those who were lost, those who saved lives, and those who continue to preserver in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.
   More Information: http://www.jwpepper.com/To-This-Heartbeat-There-Is-No-End/10015765.item#.VSGw_nF8kw

   Publ. No. ECS 6933 full score; ECS 6934 parts; ECS 6935 piano-choral score
   Instrumentation: Soprano solo, SATB chorus, chamber ensemble (flute, clarinet, horn, vibraphone/marimba, harp)
   Notes: Commissioned and premiered by the Houston Choral Society in 2006, this piece pays tribute to the Houston residents who provided shelter to the many New Orleanians who lost their homes in Hurricane Katrina.
   More Information: http://www.odu.edu/news/news-archive/2008/05/HailstorksHurricaneKa_10003#.VSnhQPnF8kw

Notes: This work was created from the emotional reaction of the composer to experiencing Hurricane Katrina and losing both his home and the school where he worked.

More Information:
http://www.jwpepper.com/From-the-Eye-of-the-Storm/10013558.item#.VSGv7fnF8kw


Notes: A song-cycle based on the book *Nine Lives* by the *New Yorker* journalist Dan Baum. This work may loosely be considered a Katrina work. Couched as it is by Hurricanes Betsy (1965) and Katrina (2005), the book and the song-cycle were attempts to tell the story of New Orleans that was much bigger than that of New Orleans and Katrina. Recorded by Mystery Street Records.

More information:


Notes: This symphonic tone poem for concert band commemorates the Hurricane Katrina experience. It was commissioned by the United State Marine Forces Reserve Band of New Orleans.


ISBN 798-1470623098
Instrumentation: Clarinet, trombone, piano
Notes: This work, commissioned by the Music Teachers National Association for the 2015 National conference, seeks to portray New Orleans before Hurricane Katrina, the immediate aftermath, and the rebirth of the city.

   Publ. No BCMF 133
   Instrumentation: Bassoon and strings
   Notes: This piece is dedicated to the memory of the victims of Hurricane Katrina in 2005.
   More Information: http://www.jwpepper.com/Suspended/10449774.item#.VSGtd_nF8kw

   Publ. No. n/a
   Instrumentation: Orchestra and narrator
   Notes: This four-movement work was commissioned by the Springfield Symphony and is based on poetry by the composer. The third and fourth movements, in particular, memorialize Hurricane Katrina and the city of New Orleans.

   Publ. No. n/a
   Instrumentation: Mezzo-soprano, guitar, flute, clarinet, trumpet, percussion, viola, cello, bass, and electronics
   Notes: This work was premiered on December 14, 2012 in New York City. “The storm brought up a lot of emotions about home and identity, what’s unique to a tradition
and what is universal, and the cycle is really born out of a reflection on the various poetic and musical meanings of home.”


42. Widrup, T. (2011). *Violin Concerto (Katrina)*. Brooklyn: Allemar Music. (available as a rental score only)

Publ. No. n/a

Instrumentation: Violin solo and orchestra

Notes: This piece was composed for violinist Ittai Shapira and was premiered by Shapira and the Knoxville Symphony in October 2011. According to the composer’s notes, this concerto is a reflection on the continued devastation of “New Orleans and the musical communities of the Delta” five years after Hurricane Katrina. This piece is recorded on Champs Hill Records.


Publ. No. n/a

Instrumentation: Flute and strings

Note: Written immediately following Hurricane Katrina, each of the five movements is a reflection on the Katrina experience and explores the themes of heroism, hope, and despair.

More Information:


Publ. No. n/a

Instrumentation: Cello and a cappella choir

Notes: This work, a lament on Hurricane Katrina, was Woolf’s Carnegie Hall debut piece in 2012.
Conclusion

Hurricane Katrina has left an indelible mark on those who experienced it firsthand. Nonetheless, this horrifying disaster also revealed the strength of the human spirit with extraordinary feats of heroism and an incredible outpouring of compassion embodied by the thousands of volunteers, millions of dollars in donations, and the hundreds of families who opened their homes and gave refuge to strangers. The forty-four Katrina works identified here memorialize the lost lives, explore the deep social issues of our time, and celebrate the strength of the human spirit. As we approach the tenth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, each of these works stands as a testament to human compassion that will remain with us for years to come.