I Lift Up Mine Eyes – God’s Gift

In Alive Now, January/February 2003, Debra Farrington wrote: “God leaves metaphorical breadcrumbs that lead us along a path of God’s choosing if we’re paying attention. Learn to notice the gifts God gave you…. God may not put a burning bush in your path, but there will be plenty of other clues about what God may want you to do.” The following choreography is one of those gifts.

I had been working off and on for weeks trying to choreograph “I Lift Up Mine Eyes.” It was slated to be danced on choir tour in Europe and at Annual Conference and time was running out. Nothing I came up with seemed right or appropriate.

One afternoon I had gone by the church for a meeting and had taken my boom box and tape of the music in with me in case I had some extra time after the meeting. After the meeting I decided to go home only to find I had locked my keys in the car. I called AAA only to be told they could not open cars with electric locks. My husband’s office was 45 minutes away and I knew he would not be happy being asked to come and open my car in the middle of the day. I was stuck!

But I had my tape, boom box and an empty church fellowship hall. I had at that moment the distinct feeling that God was saying, “All right, you’ve tried and it hasn’t worked, but you’ve given it a good try. Now I’ve gotten you trapped and I’ll give a hand.”

Within the span of less than two hours the entire piece fell into my lap. To this day I do not feel that I had anything to do with the choreography – it was a gift. When I see the piece, or dance it, I always have the feeling that it is not my work, that I could not possibly have choreographed it.

I hope you enjoy this piece and that you will be open to any pieces God is trying to give you.

“I Lift Up Mine Eyes” – Psalm 121

Choreography by Rosalie Bent Branigan, 1990
Music by Allen Pote
SATB, flute, oboe, keyboard
Hope Publishing Co. A595

5 dancers – All the dancers come into place upstage left on the introduction.

Music divides into
A theme: “I lift up mine eyes”...
B theme: “He will not let you”...
C theme: “The Lord will keep you”...

Each time a theme occurs, the movement is the same with the exception of the end of theme B.

THEME A – FULL THEME
Danced by soloist – dancer 5

I lift up mine eyes to the hills
Soloist runs from upstage left to downstage right and does an outside turn to the right, right arm low, moving to the right to propel the turn. She ends, with the right arm reaching through, in a forward lunge, left foot front.
and I wonder from where comes my help?
Soloist steps back right, right arm moving back, up and over her head, steps back left, left arm up and over and again steps back right, right arm up. These steps are large and smooth.

My help it comes from the Lord,
Soloist crosses her right foot and arm forward, all her weight on the foot. She then moves the right foot up, around and back behind the left foot, as her arm swings back, up over head. Bending slightly back, she turns backwards to the right one-and-a-half times, ending facing to the back, both arms overhead. (This is a simplified ren verso’en dehors turn. If you will google “ballet turns” you can find ballet movements defined and pictured.)

the Maker
Bending right, she swings her arms and body down and low to the right, moving around to face front the arms coming up left back over head.

of heaven and earth.
Arms still overhead, the soloist moves her hands and wrists across and back in the Hawaiian movement for “heaven” then bring both arms down to indicate the earth.

THEME A – repeated, short version
The soloist moves back a little to join the other 4 dancers and they repeat the sequence.

THEME B
He will not let you stumble;
Dancers 1 and 2 cross on diagonal; 2 supports 1 who “stumbles,” freezes.

he will not let you fall.
Dancers 3 and 4 cross on diagonal on “fall”; dancer 4 does derelopé as high as possible, leaning back, supported by 3; freezes.

The Lord is your keeper.
5, soloist, comes down to “protect” them.

The sun will not strike you by day
Dancers 1 & 2 move back on “sun,” shielding eyes; bourrée.

nor the moon by night.
dancers 3, 4 & 5 move back on “moon.”

The Lord will keep your life;
1st time
Form circle, front side lunging; lean back.

2nd time Theme B
All dancers turn right with both arms dropping back and coming up over head and down, right, outside turn, arms come back, up and over in front.

Repeat theme A short version

THEME C
On bridge, move into sides for theme B, which will follow, so that 3 & 4 and 1 & 2 are paired properly with 5 in the middle.

The Lord will keep you from all evil;
Arms come up, fold right arm over top of head.

he will keep your life.
Left arm folds over right arm.
The Lord will keep you from all evil; Soutenu turn to the right.

He will keep your life. Open left arm, then right arm, making “arches.”

He will keep your going out and your coming in

3, 5 & 2 stand still, 4 & 1 come “out,” go “in.”

from this time forth

4 & 2 move to cross.

and forever more.

3, 5, 2 move to cross, all with arms up.

THEME B
Same as before with 2nd ending step back on bridge to upstage left.

Theme A
All dancers do soloist’s part in first section.

THEME A – short version and ending

3, 5 & 2 stand still, 4 & 1 come “out,” go “in.”

On last “Where Is My Help?” all turn left, feet pivoting; right arm comes around to reach for cross.

Each chancel will require adaptation to worship center’s focal point.

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