

3 New Hampshire Songs

mixed choir

16 parts

I. Litany (R.S.A. 161:2, IV)

II. Proposition (3 verbs and a logical operator)

III. Doggerel (four voice canon #12)

Larry Polansky

1999

The 3 *New Hampshire Songs* are based on (mostly) indigenous New Hampshire texts. My family and I had lived in New Hampshire for close to 10 years — these pieces were a meditation on home.

Each is dedicated to fellow New Hampshirites who enriched my life in what is a remarkable, interesting, and contradictory state. Much of American music (at least my own) is about place. These are explicit about the possibilities of place, dedicated to others who envision new possibilities of a common place.

Each uses emblematic state text. The Shaker "abcdarius" is not from New Hampshire (nor is it actually a Shaker text), but Shaker culture and music (through Shaker music expert Mary Ann Haagen and my friends in the Shaker family at Sabbathday Lake, Maine) has been an important influence on me since moving to New Hampshire, and I wanted to set this text to music. Whether it is one of the most beautiful or nonsensical of American poems ("angleworm dog"?), it is used here with the deepest affection and respect for the culture and music it (mistakenly) represents. The subtitle was inspired by my brother, Steven Polansky, a writer, who told me, after I played him a recording of the Seeger family singing it, that he often used it to teach his poetry class, as an example of "pure doggerel."

Proposition takes its text from our famous licentious slogan, in all its potential for confusion.

Litany is an unedited setting of the text of a form which, by law, until 1999, prospective adoptive families were required to sign. My wife and I, with great discomfort, signed this document, as did others. After the law was repealed, one couple I know (Kate Soule and John McDermott), asked for their copy back and ceremoniously burned it. This piece is my own response.

All three songs use only pitches derived from the first 17 harmonics of a fundamental. *Proposition* is a kind of rhythmicana, and *Doggerel* is one of my "four voice canons" (#12).