On a Hymnsong of Philip Bliss for full orchestra by David R. Holsinger

ASCAP

Complete Full Orchestra Instrumentation

1 - Full Score
1 - Flute
1 - Oboe
1 - Clarinet in Bb 1
1 - Clarinet in Bb 2
1 - Bass Clarinet (optional)
1 - Bassoon
1 - F Horn 1
1 - F Horn 2
1 - Bb Trumpet 1
1 - Bb Trumpet 2
1 - Trombone 1
1 - Trombone 2
1 - Tuba
1 - Timpani
3 - Percussion
   Triangle, Suspended Cymbal, Bass Drum, Snare Drum, Crash Cymbals

10 - Violin I   10 - Violin II   8 - Viola   8 - Cello   6 - Double Bass

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**About the music –**

**STORY OF THE HYMN**

Horatio G. Spafford, a Chicago Presbyterian layman and successful businessman, planned a European trip for his family in 1873. In November of that year, due to unexpected last minute business developments, he had to remain in Chicago; but he sent his wife and four daughters on ahead as scheduled aboard the S.S. Ville du Havre. He expected to follow in a few days. On November 22, the ship was struck by the Lochearn, an English vessel, and sank in twelve minutes. Several days later the survivors were finally landed at Cardiff, Wales, and Mrs. Spafford cabled her husband, “Saved Alone.” Shortly afterward Spafford left by ship to join his bereaved wife.

It is speculated that on the sea near the area where it was thought his four daughters had drowned, Spafford penned this text with words so significantly describing his own personal grief, “When sorrows like sea billows roll . . .” It is noteworthy, however, that Spafford does not dwell on the theme of life’s sorrows and trials, but focuses attention in the third stanza on the redemptive work of Christ. Humanly speaking, it is amazing that one could experience such personal tragedy and sorrow as did Horatio Spafford and still be able to say with such convincing clarity, “It is well with my soul”.

Hymn writer Philip Paul Bliss was so impressed with the experience and expression of Safford’s text that he shortly wrote the music for it, first published in 1876. Bliss was a prolific writer of gospel songs throughout his brief lifetime and in most cases, he wrote both the words and the music. This hymn is one of the few exceptions.

There is speculation that this was perhaps the last gospel song written by Bliss. Bliss and his wife, Lucy, were killed in a train wreck in Ashtabula, Ohio, on December 29, 1876. Most sources mention that Bliss actually escaped from the flames at first, but was killed when he went back into the train to try and rescue his wife. Neither body was ever found.

As a postscript, Bliss” trunk was salvaged from the wreckage, and in it, evangelist D. W. Whittle found an unfinished hymn, which began, “I know not what awaits me, God kindly veils my eyes”.

**About the composer -**

DAVID R. HOLINGER

. . . presently serves Lee University, Cleveland, Tennessee, as conductor of the Wind Ensemble and Professor of Music. An elected member of the American Bandmasters Association, Holsinger is the recipient of numerous awards for his compositions. He earned a BME from Central Methodist University, a MA at the University of Central Missouri, a DMA at the University of Kansas, and has been awarded a DHL from Gustavus Adolphus College. Further information about the composer can be found at www.davidrholsinger.com, along with current errata and FAQ’s concerning his works and life.
ON A HYMNSONG OF PHILIP BLISS
Transcribed with additional music to full orchestra by the composer

SCORE

David R. Holsinger (ASCAP)

Moderately Slow, with Expression

Grande

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