

Jolicia Redd • Department of Music  
"Diversity & Me" Fall 2013 Competition

"Hand in hand, dreams combined, voice with voice, together for all times."<sup>1</sup>

As a little girl, "culture shock" was not so much going to a place and being the only individual of a different culture but rather being in a situation where everyone was of the same ethnic background. My parents instilled in me early on that everyone was special regardless of race, handicap, religion, or any other thing that would make them different from me. The greatest way they helped solidify this was to enroll me in an International Youth Chorus in which children from ages 5-18 crossed socio-economic lines to come together to share the spirit of Harmony.<sup>2</sup>

As a musician, connections between music and life lessons are ever present and the one piece that has changed my life forever is entitled "Hope for Resolution." This piece, set during the serious issues of apartheid in South Africa begins with the traditional European chant "Of the Father's Love Begotten." As the piece continues there is a sudden shift in which a South African song is sung in the native language. The song culminates with the South African chant being sung simultaneously with the European chant.

When I first sang this piece as a child, my thoughts were focused on its difficulty, and just as so many individuals today approach the coming together of different groups, my initial reaction was that bridging the gap and uniting the songs was too challenging; however, as I grew older and started to truly understand the numerous lines that separate our cultures, the true message of the song took hold. These pieces individually were

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<sup>1</sup> Lyrics taken from a song entitled "I am a Small Part of the World" by Sally Albrecht

<sup>2</sup> The chorus is HARMONY: Atlanta's International Youth Chorus

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beautiful and greatly represented their culture, but when they were put together it created something more magnificent and powerful than either of them alone.

Diversity is defined by Noah Webster as "the quality or state of having many different forms, types, ideas." Typically diversity is used to describe racial differences, but for me the element of diversity expands greater than simply the differences in our skin color to the fact that I am a Distance Education student. Valley City State University has taken what I thought to be an unattainable goal and has, in spite of my differences, embraced me as a part of the community of students. Were it not for someone crossing the traditional lines of the educational possibilities, I would not be able to complete my degree.

"I am a small part of the world, I have a small dream in my eyes. But if I tell you my dreams and if you add yours to mine together we can reach up to the skies."<sup>3</sup> What does diversity mean to me? Simply this: a community of unique and special lives coming together for a moment to create a legacy that will last a lifetime.

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<sup>3</sup> Lyrics from "I am a Small Part of the World"