



MSPA01-199  
SATB choir &  
*piano*

# How Can I Keep from Singing?

For SATB choir and piano  
With optional Chamber orchestra

A New Setting By  
**Paul A. Aitken**

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## MacKenzie & Caden's Story...

Not every piece I write tells a story...but "How Can I Keep From Singing" absolutely does.

The piece was commissioned in mid-2019 by the Brazos Valley Chorale and by November 2019, I had fully established that I would write a new setting of the familiar text. By the end of Thanksgiving 2019, I had completed the first stanza.

On December 2nd, my wife and I received news that she had a brain aneurysm requiring surgery to repair...and on December 19th, she had her first surgery through the femoral artery in her leg. The surgery was not successful and we were advised that the only solution was to fix it through a more invasive procedure: open brain surgery later that month.

Between Christmas and New Year, I wrote the second stanza and became stalled on the 3rd stanza, running out of time to complete it before the 2nd surgery which took place on December 30th. The second surgery was again unsuccessful and a 3rd attempt to repair the aneurysm was made on New Year's Eve 2019. Halfway through the third surgery, however, MacKenzie had a massive stroke that left her significantly paralyzed on her left side and nearly unable to sustain life.

Our family was devastated. The love of my life was on life support in ICU and there was nothing I could do but sit there and play music well into the night. Night after night after night.

Slowly, however, MacKenzie began to make a comeback. She first began using sign language to speak to us, and then whispering, and then speaking. She transferred from ICU to a neurological care unit, and then to a rehabilitation hospital. Over the next month and a half, she relearned to sit, and stand, and walk, and dress, and eat, and do so many things that we take for granted as human beings. MacKenzie was fully living the text: how can I keep from singing?

Over the course of her journey, I musically documented her journey: depicting our sadness, despair, and loneliness in the third stanza. The fourth stanza depicts the sense of hope and joy we have had as we've watched her continue to recover.

The same day I delivered this piece to the choir in Texas, however (and 2 days before MacKenzie's release from hospital), our youngest, 16 year-old Caden, took his own life after a multi-year struggle with depression. We began reliving the story again: shock, disbelief, despair, intense grief, and more. As I write this only a month later, we are still recovering, but we know that hope will eventually return to our lives. It will simply take time to heal.

"How Can I Keep From Singing" musically depicts what Rev. Dr. Duane Anders stated in Caden's celebration of life: 1) You are loved and you matter, 2) No pain lasts forever, 3) there is always hope, and 4) Others can help; just ask. If you asked any of 1000 people that attended Caden's service, these words ring totally true. You **ARE** loved. No pain lasts forever. There is **ALWAYS** hope. Others can, and **WILL** help. **Please** reach out.

Here's my email: [paitken25@gmail.com](mailto:paitken25@gmail.com). **#YOUmatter**

Score

*Commissioned by the Brazos Valley Chorale, in celebration of  
their 50th anniversary; Don McAvoy Jr, director.*

# How Can I Keep From Singing

*for SATB choir, piano & optional chamber orchestra*

Robert Lowry (1826-1899)

PAUL A. AITKEN (b. 1970)  
ASCAP

Flowing Gently ♩ = 84

The musical score is arranged for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, and Piano. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked 'Flowing Gently' with a quarter note equal to 84 beats per minute. The vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) are currently silent, indicated by whole rests. The piano part begins with a dynamic of *p* (piano) and features a melodic line in the right hand and a supporting bass line in the left hand. The piano part includes dynamic markings of *pp* (pianissimo) and *mp* (mezzo-piano).

# How Can I Keep From Singing

4

S *mp*  
My life flows on in end-less song; a - bove earth's lam - en - ta - tion, I

A *mp*  
My lfe flows on in end-less song; a - bove earth's lam - en - ta - tion, I

T

B

Pno. *p* *mp* *8va*

S *mf*  
catch the sweet, though far off hymn — that hails a new cre - a - tion

A *mf*  
catch the sweet, though far off hymn — that hails a new cre - a - tion, cre - a - tion.

T *mf*  
No

B *mf*  
No

Pno. *mf*

16

S  
A  
T  
B

storm can shake my in-most calm while to that rock I'm cling - ing. Since

Pno.

20

S  
A  
T  
B

Christ is Lord of heav'n and earth, How can I keep from sing - ing?

Pno.

*mp*

25

S *mp*  
Through

A *mp*  
Through

T *mp*  
Through all the tum - ult

B *mp*  
Through all the tum - ult

Pno.

30

S  
all the tum - ult and the strife, I hear that mu - sic ring - ing. It finds an ech - o

A  
all the tum - ult and the strife, I hear that mu - sic ring - ing. It finds an ech - o

T  
8 and the strife, I hear that mu - sic ring - ing. It finds an ech - o in my soul. —

B  
and the strife, I hear that mu - sic ring - ing. It finds an ech - o in my soul. —

Pno.

The image shows a musical score for the song 'How Can I Keep From Singing'. It is arranged for four vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and Piano. The score is divided into two systems. The first system starts at measure 25 and ends at measure 29. The second system starts at measure 30 and ends at measure 34. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The vocal parts have lyrics under them, and the piano part has a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The dynamics are marked as mezzo-piano (mp).

35

S in my soul. Ah. No storm can shake my

A in my soul. Ah. No storm can shake my

T 8 How can I keep from sing - ing? Ah. Storm can

B How can I keep from sing - ing? Ah. Storm can

Pno.

40

S in-most calm while to that rock I'm cling - ing. Since Christ is Lord of

A in-most calm while to that rock I'm cling - ing. Since Christ is Lord of

T 8 shake my calm. To that rock I'm cling - ing. Christ is,

B shake my calm. To that rock I'm cling - ing. Christ is,

Pno.

44

S  
heav'n and earth, how can I keep from sing - ing? \_\_\_\_\_ How can I keep from sing -

A  
heav'n and earth, how can I keep from sing - ing? \_\_\_\_\_ How can \_\_\_\_\_ I \_\_\_\_\_

T  
8  
heav'n and earth, \_\_\_\_\_ How can I keep from sing - ing? \_\_\_\_\_

B  
heav'n and earth, \_\_\_\_\_ How can I keep from sing - ing? \_\_\_\_\_

Pno.

48

**Slow & Heavy; with Anguish** ♩ = 60 *rit.* *a tempo*

S  
ing? \_\_\_\_\_

A  
sing? \_\_\_\_\_

T  
8  
Sing - ing? \_\_\_\_\_

B  
Sing - ing? \_\_\_\_\_

Pno.

**Slow & Heavy; with Anguish** ♩ = 60 *rit.* *a tempo*

*mf* *ff* *fp*



**Solo Baritone:**  
(Questioning; recit-like)

How Can I Keep From Singing

54 *p*

B

What though my joys and com - forts die?

Pno.

*ppp* (Reassuringly; allow the previous chord to blend through with sustain pedal)

60 *p*

B

I know my Sav - ior liv - eth.

Pno.

*fp* (Dramatically) *ppp* (Reassuring but distant; as before)

66

B

What though the dark - ness gath - er round?

Pno.

*fp* (Sim...) *p* "...how can I keep from singing?"

71

B

Songs in the night he giv - eth.

Pno.

*p* *mp* Reflective ♩ = 64

77

S

A

Pno.

Solo Soprano; weakly: *pp*

With more strength: *p*

How can I keep from sing - ing? — How

82

S

A

T

B

Pno.

Tutti: *p* *accel.* *cresc.*

can I keep from sing - ing? — How can I keep from sing - ing? Ah! — How

Ah! — How

How can I keep from sing - ing? Ah!

Ah. —

82

Pno.

*p* *accel.* *cresc.*

*8va*

86

S  
can I keep from sing - ing? How can I keep from sing - ing?  
can I keep from?

A  
can I keep from sing - ing? Can I keep from?

T  
How can I keep from sing - ing? Can I

B  
How can I keep from sing - ing? Can I

Pno. *With increasing hope & joy*

89

S  
Can I keep from sing - ing? *f* How can I keep from sing - ing? A - le -

A  
Can I keep from sing - ing? *f* How can I keep from sing - ing? A - le - lu -

T  
keep? How? *f* How can I keep from sing - ing? A - le -

B  
keep? How? *f* How can I keep from sing - ing? A - le -

Pno. *With Majesty* ♩ = 88 *f*

94

S lu - ia! How can I keep from sing - ing? Ah \_\_\_\_\_ How can I keep? How

A ia! A - le - lu - ia! From sing - ing? Ah! \_\_\_\_\_ How can I keep? How

T lu - ia! Can I keep from sing - ing? Ah! \_\_\_\_\_ How can I

B lu - ia! Sing - ing! Ah! \_\_\_\_\_ How can I

Pno. *rit. cresc.*

99

S can I keep from sing - ing? The

A can I keep from sing - ing? The

T keep from sing - ing? The

B keep from sing - ing? The

Pno. **Pressing Forward with Joy** ♩ = 60 *ff*

104

S  
A  
T  
B

peace of Christ makes fresh my heart, — A — foun - tain ev - er spring - ing! —

Pno.

111

S  
A  
T  
B

— All things are mine since I am his! How can I

— All things are mine since I am his! How can I

— All things are mine since I am his! How can I

— All things are mine since I am his! How can I

Pno.

117

S  
keep from sing - ing?

A  
keep from sing - ing?

T  
8 keep from sing - ing? No storm can shake my

B  
keep from sing - ing? No Storm can shake my

Pno.

122

S  
While to that Rock I'm cling - ing. Since

A  
While to that Rock I'm cling - ing. Since

T  
8 in - most calm I'm cling - ing. Since

B  
in - most calm I'm cling - ing. Since

Pno.

128 *rit.* **Maestoso (in 4)**

S Christ is Lord of heav'n and earth, how can I keep from sing - ing?  
A Christ is Lord of heav'n and earth, how can I keep from?  
T Christ is Lord of heav'n and earth, Can I  
B Christ is Lord of heav'n and earth, Can I

Pno.

133 *rit.* **Maestoso (in 4)**

S Can I keep from sing - ing? How can I keep from sing - ing? A - le -  
A Can I keep from sing - ing? How can I keep from sing - ing? A - le - lu -  
T keep? How? How can I keep from sing - ing? A - le -  
B keep? How? How can I keep from sing - ing? A - le -

Pno.

138

S lu - ia! How can I keep from sing - ing? Ah \_\_\_\_\_ How can I keep, how

A ia! A - le - lu - ia! From sing - ing? Ah! \_\_\_\_\_ How can I keep, how

T lu - ia! Can I keep from sing - ing? Ah! \_\_\_\_\_ How can I keep, how

B lu - ia! Sing - ing. Ah! \_\_\_\_\_ How can I keep, how

Pno. *Resolute* *rit.* *8va-*

143

S can I ev - er keep from sing - ing? \_\_\_\_\_

A can I ev - er keep from sing - ing? \_\_\_\_\_

T can I ev - er keep from sing - ing? \_\_\_\_\_

B can I ev - er keep from sing - ing? \_\_\_\_\_

Pno. *fff*