

Commissioned by Ann and Kathleen for Chess and Jennifer  
on the occasion of their marriage

# Set Me as a Seal upon Your Heart

(SSATB, accompanied)

Song of Songs 8:6-7

Hal H. Hopson

With slow, gentle movement ♩ = ca. 63

1 *mp* 2 3

4 *mp* 5 6

7 8 9

Set me as a seal up-on your heart, as a seal up-on your arm; for

P1490

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10 *f* *rit.* 11 12 *a tempo* *sub. p*

love is strong as death, love is strong as death. Set me as a seal up-on your heart, as a seal up-on your arm.

13 14 15 16 17 18 *rit.*

Faster  $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 80$

*f unis.*

19 Jeal-ous pas-sion is cru-el as the grave.

20

21

Faster  $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 80$

*f*

22 *ff* The flash of it is a flash of fire, — a flash of fire.

23

24

25 *div. molto rit.*

*ff unis.*

26 Slower (Tempo I)

27

28 *unis.*

29 *rit.*

*sub. p*

nei-ther can the floods drown it.

Man-y wa-ter's can-not quench love,

Slower (Tempo I)

*sub. p*

*rit.*

\*CANTOR *mp*

30

1. Were one to offer all of one's wealth for-love,

2. Love cannot be bought, love can-not be sold,

Tempo I ( $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 63$ )

31

1 it would be judged a price not great e-nough.

2 love cannot be found in the mar-ket-place.

32

33 *rit.*

Tempo I ( $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 63$ )

34

35

36

*a tempo*

*mp*

\*The chanted section (meas. 30-33) may be chanted by the choir as follows: SA - vs. 1; TB - vs. 2.

37 *mp* Set me as a seal up-on your

38 *mp*

39

40 heart, as a seal up-on your arm; for

41

42

43 *f* *rit.* *a tempo* *sub. p* love is strong as death, love is

44 *f* *sub. p*

45 *rit.* *a tempo* *f* *sub. p*

46 *a tempo* *rit.* *mp* strong as death. Set me as a seal up-on your

47

48 *mp*

49 *rit.* *a tempo* heart, as a seal up-on your

50

51 *rit.*

52 *p* *a tempo* arm.

53 *molto rit.* *pp* 54 *pp*

55 *a tempo* *molto rit.* *pp*



Hal H. Hopson is both a full-time composer and a church music clinician residing in Austin, Texas. With over 1300 published works, comprising almost every musical form in church music, he has a special affinity for congregational song. He continues to make a significant contribution to the new repertoire of hymn tunes and responsorial psalm settings as evidenced by the prolific number of his works included in newly published hymnals and psalm collections.

Hopson was born in Mound, Texas, into a family of thirteen children where music-making was a way of life. At the age of thirteen, he began playing for services in a small village church. Hopson received the Royalty-Edwards Scholarship in music at Baylor University where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree. In 1956, he earned a Master of Sacred Music degree from Southern Baptist Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky. Also, he further studied at the University of Erlangen, Erlangen, Germany; the Peabody Conservatory of Music, Baltimore, Maryland; and Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. He served as chair of the Church Music department, Westminster Choir College and taught at Scarritt Graduate School. In addition, Hopson has served congregations in several states as organist/director of music ministries.

His cantata GOD WITH US was one of the few compositions selected by a panel at the Kennedy Center, Washington, D.C., to be placed in a capsule during the American Bicentennial in 1976. It will be performed as a part of the Tricentennial in 2076 as representative of American choral music of the twentieth century. Each year, he is commissioned to compose several musical works in various genres of church music.

An active conductor and clinician who has conducted choral festivals and workshops in the United States, Canada, Europe, Korea and Japan, he also has been recognized for his contribution to music by the International Who's Who In Music, Cambridge, England. Having served on the national boards of the Presbyterian Association of Musicians and Choristers Guild, he remains active in several professional organizations, both on the national and local levels. As a member of ASCAP, Hal H. Hopson receives (and has received) an annual award from that agency for many consecutive years.

#### Comments Regarding the Text

*Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death.  
Jealous passion is cruel as the grave. The flash of it is a flash of fire.  
Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.  
Were one to offer all of one's wealth for love, it would be judged a price not at all enough.  
Love cannot be bought, love cannot be sold. Love cannot be found in the market place.  
Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death.*

This text is taken from Chapter Eight of the Song of Songs, sometimes referred to as The Song of Solomon. There are basically two views of interpretation of this book from scripture: an elaborate allegory of the love story of God and God's people; or simply a collection of poems about love and marriage. Regardless of one's interpretation, there is no doubt that these love poems were incorporated into the early church's marriage liturgies and feasts.

The use of "Set Me as a Seal upon Your Heart" in ancient wedding ceremonies has an obvious parallel in our marriage liturgies at the exchange of rings. In ancient times the wedding seal was a signet, a carved stone cylinder for impressing in clay the equivalent of a modern signature. It was carried on a cord about the neck and thus hung over the heart. The seal on the arm refers to a signet ring or decorative chain worn on the arm.

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