

Gwyneth Walker

A Bridge of Peace

for SATB Chorus and Piano



a musical setting of the poem
by Ada Aharoni

A Bridge of Peace

duration 4 minutes

*Commissioned by the American Choral Directors Association, Eastern Division
for the 2018 Eastern Division Conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*

*Premiered by the Women Composers Repertoire Honor Choir
Sharon Paul, conductor, on March 10, 2018*

Program Notes

This is a song of hope – of building a *bridge of peace* between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. They are all children of Abraham. They do not want to be each other's oppressors. Their trees (Jaffa Orange in Israel, Olive on Arab lands) reach out their branches as hands across the sky.

The musical setting presents the opening verses in dialogue between women's and men's voices. Each verse rises with the beautiful phrase:

And hold human hands high – full of free stars of twinkling peace.

A *combative* middle section introduces words such as *oppressor* and *jailor*. Reference is made to *poisoned gases* and *scud missiles*.

And then the music heals. There is a shift to the major tonality. The voices soar with the phrases *let us build a strong bridge of jasmine understanding, where each shall sit with her child. **And none shall make them afraid.***

The Poet

Professor Ada Aharoni is a poet, writer, and professor of literature and sociology, who was born in Cairo, Egypt, and now lives in Haifa, Israel. She has published 33 books to date that have won her international acclaim. She writes in English and Hebrew and her works have been translated into several languages. She believes that literature and culture can help heal the urgent ailments of our global village, such as war, terror, and poverty, and the themes of peace and conflict resolution are major ones throughout her poetry and her historical novels and biographies. One of her most published peace poems is *A Bridge of Peace*, a message from an Israeli to a Palestinian woman. Aharoni is the Founder and World President of IFLAC: The International Forum for the Literature and Culture of Peace.

The Composer

Widely performed throughout the country, the music of American composer **Gwyneth Walker** is beloved by performers and audiences alike for its energy, beauty, reverence, drama, and humor. Dr. Gwyneth Walker (b. 1947) is a graduate of Brown University and the Hartt School of Music. She holds B.A., M.M. and D.M.A. degrees in Music Composition. A former faculty member of the Oberlin College Conservatory, she resigned from academic employment in 1982 in order to pursue a career as a full-time composer. For nearly 30 years, she lived on a dairy farm in Braintree, Vermont. She now divides her time between her childhood hometown of New Canaan, Connecticut and the musical communities of Sarasota, Florida and Randolph, Vermont.

Further information concerning Gwyneth Walker and her works is available at
www.gwynethwalker.com

A Bridge of Peace

by Ada Aharoni

“They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid.” (The Bible, Micah 4.4)

“He who walks in peace, walk with him.” (The Koran, Sura 48)

My Palestinian sister, daughter of Abraham,
Let us build a sturdy bridge
From my orange world to yours,
From your olive world to mine,
Above the boiling pain of acid rain –
And hold human hands high
Full of free stars of twinkling peace.

I do not want to be your oppressor
You do not want to be my oppressor,
Or your jailer, or my jailer,
We do not want to make each other afraid
Under our vines and under our fig trees
Blossoming on a silvered horizon
Above the bruising and the bleeding
Of poisoned gases and scuds.

So, my Arab sister, let us build a strong
Bridge of jasmine understanding
Where each shall sit with her baby
Under her vine and under her fig tree –
And none shall make them afraid.
And none shall make them afraid.