

GWYNETH WALKER

Acquaintance With Nature

for SATB Chorus (divisi), Clarinet and Piano

based on the writings of Henry David Thoreau

Commissioned by *Northsong*, Newport, Vermont
Anne K. Hamilton, Music Director

Premiered by *Northsong*
May 31, 2002 – Barton, Vermont

Duration: 15'00"

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Notes

The texts for *Acquaintance With Nature* are taken from Thoreau's *Walden* and the *Journals*, dating from the 1850s. These writings chronicle the writer's sojourns in the woods of Massachusetts. But, Thoreau's exploration is beyond a geographic location. He is seeking the depths of life's meaning, the truth that comes when one chooses to "live deliberately, to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life." He wishes to know "an entire heaven and an entire earth!"

His writings are sincere, and often ecstatic – a reverence for the beauty of the woods; a delight in the small berries and cobwebs; the fresh energy of "mornings of creation." Seeking eternity, he writes, "I would drink deeper; fish in the sky, whose bottom is pebbly with stars."

Nine short excerpts of Thoreau's writings have been chosen as the basis of the musical interpretation. The Prologue and Epilogue are spoken by a Narrator, with instrumental accompaniment. This is the young writer heading off into the woods, and later returning home. The seven central sections are sung by the chorus, with instrumental accompaniment. The listener might prefer to hear these choral settings as "journal entries" rather than songs. These are brief observations on nature, each focusing on only one or two images or perceptions. One might imagine Thoreau stopping in his walk to examine each detail of the world around him – seeking acquaintance with nature.

–Notes by the composer

Score in C

Commissioned and premiered by Northsong, Anne K. Hamilton, Music Director
Newport, Vermont – May 31, 2002

Acquaintance with Nature

for SATB Chorus (divisi), Clarinet and Piano

Henry David Thoreau

Gwyneth Walker

Prologue

At a jaunty tempo ♩ = 126
as if setting out on a walk into the woods

Clarinet

Piano

6

A

10

p

2

14 B

f

18

f

22

f

26

NARRATOR walks onto stage dressed in simple outdoor clothing.

p

una corda

Narrator:

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.

30 **C**

(*p*) *leg.*

(continue to play unobtrusively behind narration)

I do not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear, nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary.

31

p *leg.*

I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world;

32

p *leg.*

or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.

33

p *leg.*

last time: *cresc.*

34 **D**

f

tre corde

39

ritard.

p

ritard.

p

pedal stays into next song

Remember Thy Creator

$\text{♩} = 88$

unis. p gently

Soprano
Alto

Re - mem - ber thy cre - a - tor in the days of thy youth. —

unis. p gently

Tenor
Bass

Re - mem - ber thy cre - a - tor in the days of thy youth. —

Clarinet

$\text{♩} = 88$

p (play only if needed to help chorus)

(*ped.*)

4

Rise free from care be - fore the dawn and seek ad -

Rise free from care be - fore the dawn and seek ad -

(Reo.)

lv.

7

ven - - - - tures.

ven - - - - tures.

Let the

mf

mf cantabile

mf

lv.

(Reo.)

9 A

and the night o - ver - take thee ev - ery - where at home.

noon find thee by oth - er lakes, ev - ery - where at home.

cantabile

(Reo.)

6
13

f **B** *f*

Grow wild ac-cord-ing to thy na-ture. Take

Grow wild Let the thun-der rum-ble.

p *f* *l.v.* *f*

leg.

17

p *mf* **C** *p*

shel-ter un-der the cloud. En-joy the land, but own it

En-joy the land, but own it

p *mf* *p*

p *l.v.*

(*leg.*)

21

S
A
T
B
Cl.

not. not. not. not.

p *mf*

p

8

10

wind whis- per- ing a - mong the reeds.

p

13 **A**

It will be e- nough if I shall leave my- self be - hind.

mf *(mf)*

16

I seek ac - quaint - ance with Na - ture, _____ to

p *mf*

19 *ritard.* **B** Slower, quasi recitative

know her moods and her man - ners. I wish to know an en - tire...

ritard. Slower, quasi recitative

hea - ven and an en - tire... earth!

22 *a tempo* (♩ = 108)

hea - ven and an en - tire... earth!

p *mf*

a tempo (♩ = 108)

* These F's can be C's, if that helps with vocal projection.

25 *ritard.*

ritard.

(*Red.*)

C Slower, quasi recitative

I wish to know an en-tire__ hea-ven and an en-tire__ earth! _____

p (*falsetto*)

Slower, quasi recitative

a tempo

ritard.

p

a tempo

ritard.

p

Leg.

I Perceive the Spring in the Softened Air

At a lively tempo ♩ = 132

Piano

p lightly, with excitement

simile

una corda sempre (for the entire song)

A
p smoothly, with excitement

5

S
I per - ceive the

A
I per - ceive the

p smoothly, with excitement

ped. *simile*

8

spring in the soft - ened air, *poco cresc.*

spring in the soft - ened air, *poco cresc.*

poco cresc.

11

pp soft - ened air. *poco cresc.*

pp soft - ened air. *poco cresc.*

pp *poco cresc.*

13 **B**

p

Look - ing through the trans - par - ent va - pors, all sur - fac - es look more

p

Look - ing through the trans - par - ent va - pors, all sur - fac - es look more

p

16

mp **C**

viv - id. The hard - ness of win - ter

mp

viv - id. The hard - ness of win - ter

mp

ritard.

mp

mp

19 *ritard.*

p

is re - laxed.

p

is re - laxed.

ritard.

p

ritard.

p

accelerando

foot - steps of spring! _____

foot - steps of spring! _____

foot - steps of spring! _____

foot - steps of spring! _____

accelerando
loco
p

gradual cresc. to m. 40

F *a tempo* (♩ = 132)

[blurred effect, as in spring air]

p with excitement, *cresc. poco a poco*

I per - ceive the spring in the soft - ened air. _____

p with excitement, *cresc. poco a poco*

I per - ceive the spring in the soft - ened air. _____

p with excitement, *cresc. poco a poco*

I per - ceive the spring in the

p with excitement, *cresc. poco a poco*

I per - ceive the

a tempo (♩ = 132)

gradual cresc. to m. 40

Leg. _____ *Leg.* _____

35

I per - ceive the spring in the soft - ened air. _____
_____ I per - ceive the spring in the soft - ened air. _____
soft - ened air. _____ I per - ceive the spring in the
spring in the soft - ened air. _____ I per - ceive the

The piano accompaniment consists of two staves. The right hand plays a continuous eighth-note pattern with a five-finger roll (marked '5') in each measure. The left hand plays a similar eighth-note pattern, also with a five-finger roll (marked '5'). The piece concludes with a fermata over the final notes of both hands, with the word 'Ado.' written below the staves.

37

I per - ceive the spring in the soft - ened air, soft - ened air,
_____ I per - ceive the spring in the soft - ened air,
soft - ened air. _____ I per - ceive the spring in the
spring in the soft - ened air. _____ I per - ceive the

The piano accompaniment continues with the same eighth-note patterns and five-finger rolls (marked '5') in both hands. It concludes with a fermata over the final notes, with the word 'Ado.' written below the staves.

Mornings

Quickly ♩ = 152

Soprano

Alto

Tenor *pp hushed*
Morn-ing, morn-ing,

Bass

Clarinet *pp hushed*

Piano

Quickly ♩ = 152

(*And.*)

5

T *pp hushed*
morn-ing, morn-ing,

B *pp hushed*
morn-ing, morn-ing,

Cl.

(*And.*)

9 A

morn-ing, morn-ing, morn-ing,

morn - ing, morn - ing, morn - ing,

tre corde

12

morn-ing, morn-ing, morn-ing,

morn - ing, morn - ing, morn - ing,

15

B

p very rhythmically

S
There are from time to time

A
p very rhythmically
There are from time to time

T
morn - ing, morn - ing, morn - ing,

B
morn - ing, morn - ing, morn - ing,

Cl.

18

morn - ings, both in

morn - ings, both in

T
morn - ing, morn - ing, morn - ing,

B
morn - ing, morn - ing, morn - ing,

27 *cresc.*

S
A

cresc.

T
B

cresc.

Cl.

p cresc.

p cresc.

31 **D** *f*

Morn - ings, morn - ings,

f

f *p* *f* *p*

f *p* *f* *p*

35 *ritard.*

morn - - - ings, morn - - - ings,

f *p* *f* *p*

f *p* *f* *p* *ritard.*

39 **E** Slower, gently
p

The world has been re - cre - - a - ted in the night. Morn - ings of cre - a - tion, I

The world has been re - cre - - a - ted in the night. Morn - ings of cre - a - tion, I

Slower, gently

gradual cresc. to m. 51

42

call them. It is the po - et's hour, the po - et's hour,

call them. It is the po - et's hour, the po - et's hour,

gradual cresc. to m. 51
unis.
cresc. poco a poco

unis.
cresc. poco a poco

[Play small notes (through m. 52)
as much as needed to support chorus.]

46 (*cresc.*)

Morn-ings when we are new - born, we who have the seeds of life in

Morn-ings when we are new - born, we who have the seeds of life in

(cresc.)

49 *ritard.* **F** *a tempo* (♩ = 152) *f*

S
us.

A
us.

T
8 us, the seeds of life in us.

B
us, the seeds of life in us.

Cl.

ritard. *f* *a tempo* (♩ = 152)

53

Morn - ings, morn - ings,

Morn - ings, morn - ings,

Morn - ings, morn - ings,

Morn - ings, *unis.* morn - ings, *unis.*

Morn - ings, morn - ings,

Play *p* *f* *p*

f *p* *f* *p*

accelerando

morn - ings, morn - ings, morn - ings, morn - ings,
 morn - ings, morn - ings, morn - ings, morn - ings,
 morn - ings, morn - ings, morn - ings, morn - ings,
 morn - ings, morn - ings, morn - ings, morn - ings,
 morn - ings, morn - ings, morn - ings, morn - ings,
 morn - ings, morn - ings, morn - ings, morn - ings,
 morn - ings, morn - ings, morn - ings, morn - ings,
 morn - ings, morn - ings, morn - ings, morn - ings,

f
accelerando

As quickly as possible

ff

morn - ings, morn - ings, morn - ings, morn - ings!
 morn - ings, morn - ings, morn - ings, morn - ings!
 morn - ings, morn - ings, morn - ings, morn - ings!
 morn - ings, morn - ings, morn - ings, morn - ings!

ff
As quickly as possible
ff
l.v.

Rec.

pedal stays into next song *attacca*

Dry, Hazy June Weather

long **Slowly, static** *p*

Soprano
It is dry, ha - zy June wea - ther. We are

Alto
It is dry, ha - zy June wea - ther. We are

Tenor
It is dry, ha - zy June wea - ther. We are

Bass
It is dry, ha - zy June wea - ther. We are

Piano
long **Slowly, static** *f*
low, black-note cluster played with the palms of both hands
p *l.v.*

(*Leo*)

5

more of the earth, far - ther from hea - ven these days. We are get - ting

more of the earth, far - ther from hea - ven these days. We are get - ting

more of the earth, far - ther from hea - ven these days. We are get - ting

more of the earth, far - ther from hea - ven these days. We are get - ting

Piano
(p) *l.v.*

(*Leo*)

9

deep - er in - to the mists of the earth. The sea-son of hope and

slightly higher cluster,
top note near Soprano

l.v.

(*lento*)

13

pro - mise is past; al - read-y the sea-son of small fruits has ar -

slightly higher again

mp *l.v.*

(*lento*)

17

S rived, the sea-son when ber-ries are ripe. The

A rived, the sea-son when ber-ries are ripe. The

T rived, the sea-son when ber-ries are ripe.

B rived, the sea-son when ber-ries are ripe.

Cl. *mf*

mf l.v.

(*And.*)

21

S pros-pect of the hea-vens is ta-ken a-way, and we are pre-

A pros-pect of the hea-vens is ta-ken a-way, and we are pre-

T Ah, and we are pre-

B Ah, and we are pre-

f *f* *f* *f*

f l.v.

(*And.*)

sent - ed with on - ly a few small ber - ries.

sent - ed with on - ly a few small ber - ries.

sent - ed with on - ly a few small ber - ries.

sent - ed with on - ly a few small ber - ries.

(*Ad lib.*)

FREE MEASURE (not conducted)

ad libitum, using these pitches, create patterns to depict berries falling.

continue into next song

Cl. *p*

random black-note clusters, playfully, to depict berries falling

p

Piano stops while Clarinet continues

Dew on the Cobwebs

Clarinet $\text{♩} = 72$ *mf* || stop

Piano $\text{♩} = 72$ *mf* *simile*

poco Ad lib. ad lib.

7 A *mf* joyfully

S
A
T
B

Ev - ery - where _____ there is dew on the

mf joyfully

Cl.

12

p

cob - webs, _____ lit - tle gos - sa - mer veils, _____ *unis. p*

cob - webs, _____ or

p

p

17 *mf*

They were

scarfs as big as your hand. _____

mf

mf

mf

mf

21 **B** *p*

S
dropped from the fair - y should - ers that danced on the grass last

A
dropped from the fair - y should - ers that danced on the grass last

T
p
They were dropped by the fair-ies that danced on the grass last

B
p
They were dropped by the fair-ies that danced on the grass last

Cl.
p

25 *f*

night,

f

night,

f

night,

f

night,

29 **C**

p _____ *f*
 Dew, _____ *f*
p _____ *f*
 Dew, _____ *f*
p _____ *f*
 Dew, _____ *f*
p _____ *f*
 Dew, _____ *f*

f *p* 8 8 8 8
f *p cresc.*

33

p _____
 dew. _____
p _____
 dew. _____
p _____
 dew. _____
p _____
 dew. _____

f *p*
f *p cresc.*
f *p cresc.*
f *p cresc.*

D

Ev - ery-where ev - ery -
 ev - ery-where cob -
 cob -

webs,
 where there are ev - ery - where, ev - ery-where, ev - ery -
 there are cob- webs, ev - ery-where, ev - ery -
 ev - ery - where there are cob - webs,
 there are cob- webs and cob - webs,

where there are ev - ery - where, ev - ery-where, ev - ery -
 there are cob- webs, ev - ery-where, ev - ery -
 ev - ery - where there are cob - webs,
 there are cob- webs and cob - webs,
 there are cob- webs and cob - webs,

E ♩ = 108 (♩ = ♩)

42

f

where, ev - ery - where! They were dropped from the fair - y should - ers that

f

where, ev - ery - where! They were dropped from the fair - y should - ers that

f

cob - - - webs. They were dropped from the fair - y should - ers that

f

cob - - - webs. They were dropped from the fair - y should - ers that

♩ = 108 (♩ = ♩)

f

Play small notes only if needed to support chorus.

[Conduct in little upward whisking motions]

45

ritard.

pp whispered, no pitch

danced on the grass last night!

pp whispered, no pitch

danced on the grass last night!

pp whispered, no pitch

danced on the grass last night!

pp whispered, no pitch

danced on the grass last night!

pp whispered, no pitch

danced on the grass last night!

pp whispered, no pitch

danced on the grass last night!

gentle key clicks

ritard.

a tempo

Play

pp

The First Star is Lit

Clarinet

Slowly and peacefully ♩ = 80

Piano

Slowly and peacefully ♩ = 80

15^{ma}

pp

ped.

6

pp

p

loco

15^{ma}

9:8

ped.

9

pp

p

loco

15^{ma}

loco

15^{ma}

10:8

10:8

ped.

13

loco 15^{ma} loco 15^{ma} loco 15^{ma}

10:8 10:8 10:8

Loco. Loco. Loco.

16

A Solo *mf cantabile*

S Ev - ery day a new pic - ture is paint - ed and framed, —

Cl.

loco 15^{ma}

10:8

Loco.

19

S

A Solo *mf cantabile*

held up for half an hour, —

B Solo *mf cantabile*

in such

loco 15^{ma}

10:8 10:8

Loco. Loco.

A few voices
mf cantabile

22

S
B

lights as the Great Ar - tist choos - - - es, _____

and

Cl.

mf

(15^{ma})

loco

(*Loc.*)

25 **B**

S
A
T
B
Cl.

then with - drawn,

A few voices *mf cantabile*

and the cur - tain falls.

A few voices *mf cantabile*

And then the sun goes down,

A few voices *mf cantabile*

and the

pp

15^{ma}

loco

15^{ma}

10:8

10:8

(*Loc.*)

29

Tutti *mf*

And then the

long af - ter - glow gives light.

mf

loco 10:8 15^{ma} *loco*

leg.

leg.

33 C

ritard.

dam - ask cur - tains glow

Tutti *mf*

a - long the west - ern win - dow.

Tutti *mf*

a - long the west - ern win - dow.

Tutti *mf*

a - long the west - ern win - dow.

p

ritard.

leg.

leg.

36 *p* *a tempo* (♩ = 72) *poco cresc.*

And then the first star is lit, and I go

p *poco cresc.*

And then the first star is lit, and I go

p *poco cresc.*

And then the first star is lit, and I go

p *poco cresc.*

And then the first star is lit, and I go

a tempo (♩ = 72) *p*

D Quickly, Tempo primo ♩ = 126

40 *p* *f*

home.

p *f*

home.

p *f*

home.

p *f*

home.

Quickly, Tempo primo ♩ = 126 *f*

And. *And.* *simile*

44

unis.
home, mm

home, mm

home, unis.
home,

47

ritard.
dim. NARRATOR walks to the edge of the stage.

mm
dim.

mm
dim.

mm
dim.

mm
mm

dim.

mm
mm

dim. 3

ritard.
dim.

Epilogue

Narrator: words in boldface type approximately align with measures.

Time is but the stream I go a - fishing in. I **drink** at it; but while I
At a gentle pace ♩ = 108

Soprano Alto

Tenor Bass

Clarinet

Piano

pp

una corda

At a gentle pace ♩ = 108

4 **drink** I see the sandy **bottom** and detect how **shallow** it is.

mm

mm

mm

7 Its thin currents **slide** away, but **eternity** remains.

mm mm mm

10 **A** I would drink deeper,

S

B

mm mm mm

tre corde

13 fish in the sky, whose **bottom** is

mm mm mm

42

16 pebbly with

stars.
cresc.

mm Ah

cresc.

cresc.

cresc.

NARRATOR slowly walks off stage.

19 **B**

S *f* I would drink deep - er; *p f* fish in the sky,

B *f* I would drink deep - er; *p f* fish in the sky,

f *p f*

f *p f*

f

22

S *p f* whose bot-tom is peb - bly with

A *p f* whose bot-tom is peb - bly with

T *p f* whose bot-tom is peb - bly with

B *p f* whose bot-tom is peb - bly with

Cl. *f*

p f

p f

p f

p f

f

25 **C** [look up to the sky] *p*

1 S stars, _____

2 S [look up to the sky] *p* stars, _____

1 A [look up to the sky] *p* stars, _____

2 A [look up to the sky] *p* stars, _____

1 T [look up to the sky] *p* stars, _____

2 T [look up to the sky] *p* stars, _____

1 B [look up to the sky] *p* stars, _____

2 B [look up to the sky] *p* stars, _____

Cl.

8^{va} **C**

pp rapidly, blurred

scd.

27

1 S stars, _____

2 S stars, _____

1 A _____ stars, _____

2 A _____ stars, _____

1 T _____ stars, _____

2 T _____ stars, _____

1 B _____ stars, _____

2 B _____ stars, _____

Cl. _____

(*8va*)

(*Leg.*)

29

1 S stars, stars,

2 S stars, stars,

1 A stars, stars,

2 A stars, stars,

1 T stars, stars,

2 T stars, stars,

1 B stars, stars,

2 B stars, stars,

p 3 3 3

(8^{va})

(*And.*)

33

1 S stars, stars. *ritard.* *pp*

2 S stars, stars. *pp*

1 A stars, stars. *pp*

2 A stars, stars. *pp*

1 T stars, stars. *pp*

2 T stars, stars. *pp*

1 B stars, stars. *pp*

2 B stars, stars. *pp*

pp

ritard. *pp*

(*Leg.*)