

Gwyneth Walker

Gestalt at Sixty

*for Narrator and Piano
based on the poem by May Sarton*

duration: 9 minutes

*Premiered by Denise Walker, narrator,
and Estrid Eklof, pianist at the
Celebration of the Music Makers Festival
Chandler Music Hall
Randolph, Vermont
October 13, 2007*

***Gestalt at Sixty** is a dramatization, for narrator and piano, of the poem by May Sarton. The composer has selected this poem due to her affinity with the expression. Both the composer and poet are artists who live and work in solitude in rural New England. Many of the moods and sentiments are shared. And, on the occasion of the composer's sixtieth year, this was a very appropriate poem.*

In solitude, the imagination flourishes, and the landscape comes to life. The trees "groan." The mountains become a friend. Solitude "exposes the nerve." There are moments of panic, times of loneliness.

Yet the spirit survives – strong, renewable, fertile like the flowers in a well-worked garden. The writer lives in her imagination, never alone, always moving towards a new freedom.

*"As I approach sixty, I turn my face towards the sea.
I shall go where the tides replace time,
where my world will open to a new horizon.
There are no farewells."*

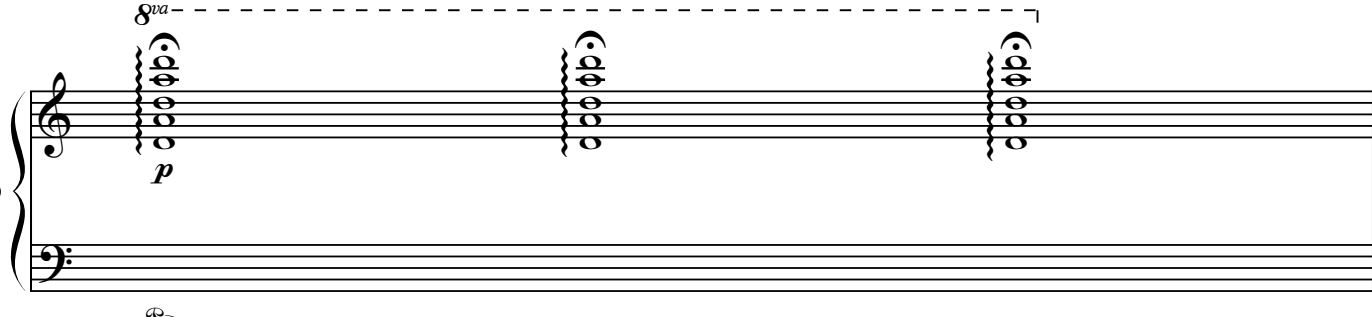
Gestalt at Sixty

for Narrator and Piano

Poem by MAY SARTON

Music by GWYNETH WALKER

Piano



8va

p

(*Rec.*)

Detailed description: This block contains the piano introduction. It features a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The treble clef has a dashed line above it labeled '8va'. There are three chords, each consisting of a dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note, with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The bass clef is empty. A recording cue '(Rec.)' is at the bottom.

For ten years I have been rooted in these hills,
The changing light on landlocked lakes,

For ten years have called a mountain, friend,
Have been nourished by plants, still waters,
Trees in their seasons,
Have fought in this quiet place
For my self.

2 [A]


(play during reading)

start

Quickly ♩ = 108

pp

repeat entire pattern



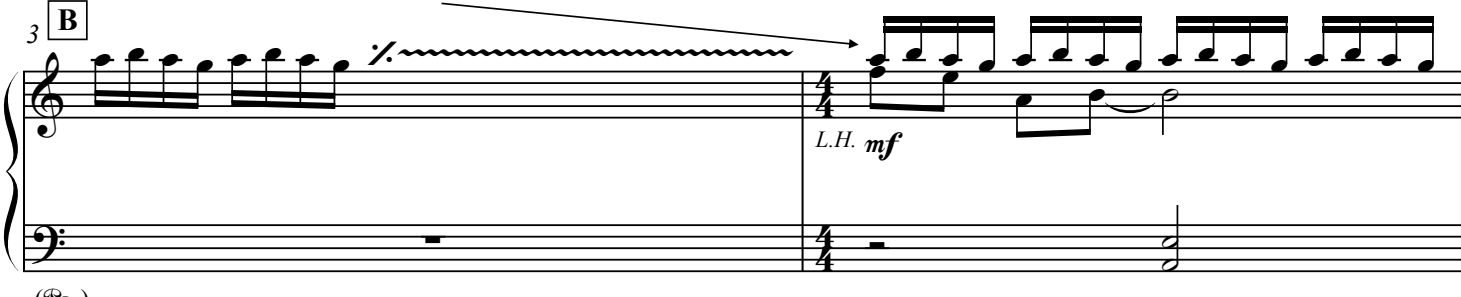
(*Rec.*)

Detailed description: This block contains musical notation for section A. It starts with a box labeled '2 [A]'. The treble clef has a 'start' arrow pointing to the beginning of a rapid eighth-note pattern. The dynamic is *pp*. The tempo is 'Quickly ♩ = 108'. The pattern ends with a repeat sign and the instruction 'repeat entire pattern'. The bass clef is empty. A recording cue '(Rec.)' is at the bottom.

I can tell you that first winter
I heard the trees groan.

3 [B]

L.H. mf



(*Rec.*)

Detailed description: This block contains musical notation for section B. It starts with a box labeled '3 [B]'. The treble clef has a repeat sign followed by a wavy line, then an arrow pointing to a new eighth-note pattern. The dynamic is *L.H. mf*. The bass clef has a few notes. A recording cue '(Rec.)' is at the bottom.

(reading synchronizes approximately with music)

I heard the fierce lament
As if they were on the rack under the wind.

5

(Leo.)

I too have groaned here,
Wept the wild winter tears.

8

(Leo.)

I can tell you that solitude Is not all exaltation, inner space Where the soul breathes and work can be done.	Solitude exposes the nerve, Raises up ghosts. The past, never at rest, flows through it.
---	--

10

fades out

(Leo.)

Who wakes in a house alone wakes to moments of panic.	(Will the roof fall in?)
--	--------------------------

11

C (♩ = 108)

rit.

a tempo (♩ = 108)

(Leo.)

Who wakes in a house alone
Wakes to inertia sometimes,
To fits of weeping for no reason.
Solitude swells the inner space
Like a balloon.
We are wafted hither and thither
On the air currents.
How to land it?

Shall I die today?)

14 *rit.*

(*Rec.*)

I worked out anguish in a garden.
Without the flowers,
The shadow of trees on snow, their punctuation,
I might not have survived.

D

15 Peacefully ♩ = 72

(p) sustained

with pedal

I came here to create a world
As strong, renewable, fertile,
As the world of nature all around me—
Learned to clear myself as I have cleared the pasture,

19

Learned to wait,
Learned that change is always in the making
(Inner and outer) if one can be patient,
Learned to trust myself.

23 *poco accel.*

poco cresc.

(accel.)

27

(cresc.)

Faster

31

Reo.

The house is receptacle
of a hundred currents.
Letters pour in,
Rumor of the human ocean,
never at rest,
Never still...
Sometimes it deafens and numbs me.

I did not come here for
society.
In these years
When every meeting is
collision,
The impact huge,
The reverberations

34

(Reo.)

descending diatonic scale

Yet what I have done here
I have not done alone,
Inhabited by a rich past of lives,
Inhabited also by the great dead,
By music, poetry—
Yeats, Valéry stalk through this house.

No day passes
without a visitation
Rilke, Mozart.

I am always a lover here,
Seized and shaken by love.

F Lightly, as a waltz ♩ = 66

36

Lovers and friends,
I come to you starved
For all you have to give,
Nourished by the food of solitude,

A good instrument for all you have to tell me,
For all I have to tell you.

41

We talk of first and last things,
Listen to music together,
Climb the long hill to the cemetery
In autumn,

Take another road in spring
Toward newborn lambs.

49

No one comes to this house
Who is not changed.
I meet no one here
who does not change me.

G More lively ♩. = 72

Faster

(♩ = ♩) More slowly

How rich and long the hours become,
 How brief the years,
 In this house of gathering,
 This life about to enter its seventh decade.

I live like a baby
 Who bursts into laughter
 At a sunbeam on the wall,
 Or like a very old woman
 Entranced by the prick of stars
 Through the leaves.

And now, as the fruit gathers
 All the riches of summer
 Into its compact world,
 I feel richer than ever before,
 And breathe a larger air.

67 **H**

(*ped.*) (release pedal during reading)

I am not ready to die,
 But I am learning to trust death
 As I have trusted life.

68 **I** Peacefully, sustained ♩ = 72

p
with pedal

I am moving
 Toward a new freedom
 Born of detachment,
 And a sweeter grace—
 Learning to let go.

72

I am not ready to die,
 But as I approach sixty
 I turn my face toward the sea.

76 *poco accel.*

poco cresc.

I shall go where tides replace time,
Where my world will open to a far horizon.

Over the floating, never-still flux
and change.
I shall go with the changes,

J Quickly

80

mp

dim.

Ped.

I shall look far out over golden grasses
And blue waters;

83 ^{8va}

(dim.)

p

loco

(Ped.)

There are no farewells.

86 ^(8va)

rit.

fades out

(Ped.)

K

Praise God for His mercies,
For His austere demands,
For His light
And for His darkness.

87

Slowly *8va-* **Quickly** *rit.* *8va-* (play about 6 times)

mf *p*

(*ped.*) (*ped.*)

88

Quickly *rit.* *8va-* (play about 6 times) **Quickly** *8va-*

mf *p* *mf*

(*ped.*) (*ped.*)

89

rit. *8va-* (play about 6 times) **Slowly** *8va-* *rit.*

p (*p*) *pp*

(*ped.*)

Duration: 9'00"
January 7, 2007