



**GWYNETH WALKER**

# Shoe Jazz

four songs on poems by Nikki Giovanni

*for Youth Chorus and Brass Quintet (or Piano)*



1. First Chair
2. No Heaven
3. Shoe Jazz Blue Jazz
4. I Know the Song the Moon Sings

**FULL SCORE**

# Shoe Jazz

duration 12:10

The texts for *Shoe Jazz* are found in a 2009 collection entitled Bicycles by African-American poet Nikki Giovanni (b. 1943). These poems speak to all ages – young and old. There is humor, tenderness, rhythmic energy and strength, with an over-riding message of *I am who I am!*

The opening song, “First Chair,” speaks of a desire to play first chair (the premiere seat in an orchestra section), but knowing *I’m too jazzy...I am Gospel...and Rhythm and Blues. I make my own music*. This song uses a swing rhythm almost throughout. The astute listener may hear the high octave motive (elevated) for the words *First Chair*. References to the music of Vivaldi and Beethoven provide contrast between “preferred” music, and the poet’s natural music.

“No Heaven” is a *pure* song, in the key of C Major. *How can there be no heaven, when rain falls gently on the grass*. A charming image comes with: *And little finches eat upside down*. Here the chorus sings upward grace-note figures to suggest upside-down chords. The song ends very simply with *How can there be no heaven...when you smile at me*.

“Shoe Jazz Blue Jazz” makes reference to Miles Davis (iconic American jazz trumpeter). *Miles Davis – All Blues*. This is an especially, swing rhythmic, relaxed tempo song. The shoes come in many colors. Perhaps these are dancing shoes. But they also tap out any little ants scurrying across the floor! Vocal sounds enhance the rhythms: *ta-ta-ta-ta...*

“I Know the Song the Moon Sings” is an extended song, due to the expanded message of the poem. The mood ranges from ephemeral moonlight (gentle high *tremoli* in the accompaniment, chorus with upward thoughts of the moon) to a more down-to-earth soulful singing (*I, too, am a motherless child*). The music briefly quotes from the spiritual, “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child.” However, this *motherless child* is full of energy, *running wild!* Thus, a refrain from “Shoe Jazz Blue Jazz” returns to close the set.

## Poems

### FIRST CHAIR

They say I'm too jazzy  
For First Chair

I bring something different  
And maybe something nice

But the orchestra is Baroque  
And I am Gospel

It is Beethoven  
And I'm Rhythm and Blues

It's piano  
And I'm honking sax

My problem is:  
I make my own muffins  
Ice cream  
And music

Not always the best  
But all ways my best

I look good  
And I dress well

I definitely have  
Stage presence

I want to play  
I want to play  
I want to play

### NO HEAVEN

How can there be  
No Heaven

When rain falls  
gently on the grass  
When sunshine scampers  
across my toes

When corn bakes  
into bread  
When wheat melts  
into cake

When shadows  
cool  
And owls  
call  
And little finches  
eat upside  
down

How can there be  
No Heaven

When tears comfort  
When dreams caress  
When you smile  
at me

## SHOE JAZZ BLUE JAZZ

Green shoes  
Blue shoes  
Red shoes  
Good news  
  
Bad news  
Suede shoes  
No ties  
Loose pants  
  
Pink shoes  
    Shining  
White shoes  
    Whining  
All shoes  
    Dining  
On the little ants  
  
Your shoes  
Her shoes  
My shoes  
Good news  
  
His shoes  
Those shoes  
Miles Davis  
All Blues

## I KNOW THE SONG

I know the song  
The moon sings  
Though she only sings  
To moonbeams  
And to all the stars  
That twinkle  
In the night  
  
I know the song  
Her heart hears  
Since she belongs  
To no one  
And there is none to hear  
Her sing her song  
  
I know to sing  
The moon song  
That mostly the moon  
Sings alone  
Bravely  
Through the night  
  
I know the song  
The moon sings  
I understand the harmony rings  
That tinkle chiming for the sun  
  
I, too, am  
A motherless child  
My heart and soul  
Are running wild  
  
I, too, am a motherless child

# Shoe Jazz

for Youth Chorus and Brass Quintet (or Piano)

Nikki Giovanni  
from Bicycles 2009\*

Gwyneth Walker

## 1. First Chair

$\text{♩} = 120$  swing eighths  
with subtle energy, in a jazz style

YOUTH CHORUS

Trumpet 1  
in C\*\*

Trumpet 2  
in C\*\*

Horn in F

Trombone

Tuba

6

Y  
C

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Hn.

Tbn.

Tuba

\*Used with permission of the poet

\*\*Parts for B $\flat$  Trumpets are also available

**Freely** *f* recite on pitch, free rhythm

*straight eighths* [strong break] *mf*

*a tempo* (♩ = 120) *swing eighths* *f* **Freely** *straight eighths*

Y C 27

But the orchestra is Baroque And I am Gos - pel It is Beet - ho - ven.

(a bit of Vivaldi!) (Beethoven's Symphony #5!)

Tpt. 1 *sfp* *f* *mf* *f*<sup>3</sup>

Tpt. 2 *sfp* *f* *mf* *f*<sup>3</sup>

Hn. *sfp* *f* *mf* *f*<sup>3</sup>

Tbn. *sfp* *f* *mf* *f*<sup>3</sup>

Tuba *mf* *f*<sup>3</sup>

[Optional: for humorous affect, Tuba may "pseudo-conduct" the other brass in a stiff, Baroque manner]

[Tuba "pseudo-conducts" Beethoven]

*a tempo* (♩ = 120) **C** **Freely** (*ossia for lower voices*) (*f*)

Y C 32 *mf* *swing eighths* *f*

And I'm Rhy - thm and Blues It's pi - a - no And I'm

(as a piano arpeggio)

Tpt. 1 *mf* *f*<sup>3</sup>

Tpt. 2 *mf* *f*<sup>3</sup>

Hn. *mf* *f*<sup>3</sup>

Tbn. *mf* *f*<sup>3</sup>

Tuba *mf* *f*<sup>3</sup>

37 *a tempo* (♩ = 120)

Y C honk - ing sax ta ta ta ta ta ta

[non-pitched vocal sounds to resemble tapping on a Cymbal] *mf*

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Hn.

Tbn.

Tuba

**D** Freely, slowly straight eighths  
recited on pitch

42

Y C *f*

My problem is: | I make my own muf - fins Ice cream And mu - sic

[cut-off]

Tpt. 1 *sfp* *mf* *f*

Tpt. 2 *sfp* *mf* *f*

Hn. *sfp* *mf* *f*

Tbn. *sfp* *mf* *f*

Tuba *sfp* *mf* *f*

44

Y C *f* [strong break] *p* *a tempo* (♩ = 120) swing eighths

Not al - ways the best but al - ways my best

Tpt. 1 *sfp* *p* *mf*

Tpt. 2 *sfp* *p* *mf*

Hn. *sfp* *p* *mf*

Tbn. *sfp* *p* *mf*

Tuba *sfp* *p* *mf*

49

Y C *mf* *(mf)* gracefully, well-behaved!

ta ta ta ta I look good And I

Tpt. 1 *(mf)*

Tpt. 2

Hn.

Tbn.

Tuba

80 *(cresc.)* *f*

Y  
C

I want\_ to play I want to want to want to play I want\_ to play I want to want to want to play

Tpt. 1 *(cresc.)*

Tpt. 2 *(cresc.)*

Hn. *(cresc.)*

Tbn. *(cresc.)*

Tuba *(cresc.)*

84 **H**

[Raise hand in the air and wave to get attention] *Speak or shout enthusiastically*

Y  
C

I WANT TO PLAY!

Tpt. 1 *f*

Tpt. 2 *f*

Hn. *f*

Tbn. *f*

Tuba *f*



# 2. No Heaven

♩ = 100 or slower

Y  
C

Tpt. 1  
Open  
*p* gently, reverently

Tpt. 2  
Open  
*p* gently, reverently

Hn.  
Open  
*p* gently, reverently

Tbn.  
Open  
*p* gently, reverently

Tuba  
Open *lightly tongued*  
*p* gently, reverently  
*delicately*

Detailed description: This system contains the first six staves of the score. The Y and C parts are silent. The Tpt. 1, Tpt. 2, and Hn. parts play a melodic line starting on a half note G4, moving to a dotted quarter note A4, then a quarter note B4, and finally a half note C5. The Tbn. part plays a similar line but with a lower octave. The Tuba part enters in the second measure with a half note G2, followed by a dotted quarter note A2, a quarter note B2, and a half note C3. The tempo is marked as 100 or slower.

8

Y  
C

**A**  
*p* gently

How can there be No Hea - ven When rain falls gent - ly on the grass When

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Hn.

Tbn.

Tuba

Detailed description: This system contains the vocal line and the accompaniment for the second system. The Y and C parts have the lyrics: "How can there be No Hea - ven When rain falls gent - ly on the grass When". The vocal line starts on a half note G4, followed by a dotted quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a half note C5. The accompaniment for Tpt. 1, Tpt. 2, Hn., Tbn., and Tuba follows the same melodic pattern as in the first system. A box labeled 'A' is placed above the vocal line in the second measure. The tempo is marked as 100 or slower.

14 B

Y  
C *mp*

sun - shine scam - pers a - cross my toes No Hea - ven No Hea - ven How can there be No

Tpt. 1 *mp*

Tpt. 2 *mp*

Hn. *mp*

Tbn. *mp*

Tuba *mp*

19

Y  
C

Hea - ven When corn bakes in - to\_\_ bread When wheat melts in - to\_\_ cake No

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Hn.

Tbn.

Tuba

24

Y  
C

hea - ven No Hea - ven No Hea - ven

Tpt. 1 *p*

Tpt. 2 *p*

Hn.

Tbn. *p*

Tuba *p*

29 *mf* **C**

Y C

When sha - dows cool \_\_\_\_\_ And owls call \_\_\_\_\_ And lit - tle *\*p delicately*

Tpt. 1 *p*

Tpt. 2 *p*

Hn. *colla voce* *mf*

Tbn.

Tuba

34 *(grace notes before the beat to simulate "upside down" gesture)* *poco cresc.* *in wonderment at the finches* *mf*

Y C

finch - es eat up - side down, up - side down, up - side down, ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah

Hand over bell, *delicately* Open

Tpt. 1 *(p)* *mf* Open

Tpt. 2 *(p)* *mf* Open

Hn. *(p)* *mf* Open

Tbn. *(p)* *mf* Open

Tuba *(p)* *mf*

40 *p* **D**

Y C

No Hea - ven No Hea - ven

Tpt. 1 *p* *mf*

Tpt. 2 *p* *mf*

Hn. *p* *mf*

Tbn. *p* *mf*

Tuba *p* *mf*

\*Cue-size notes are an *ossia* for lower voices.

[Cue-sized notes are an optional background harmony]

46 *p* Ah Ah Ah

52 *f emphatically*

How can there be No Hea - ven When tears com - fort When dreams car -

57 *p* *rit. to end* *(p)*

ess When you smile at me

### 3. Shoe Jazz Blue Jazz

[connector from the previous song]

♩ = 120, or slower

[Chorus stomp feet on ants on floor!]

**D** (alternate ad lib.)

39

Y C

Your shoes Her shoes My shoes

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Hn.

Tbn.

Tuba

*f* *p* *p* *p* *f* *p*

44

Y C

Good news His shoes Those shoes \*Miles Da - vis! \_\_\_\_\_

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Hn.

Tbn.

Tuba

*f* *f* *f* *f* *f* *f*

**E** Interlude  
(chorus admires shoes, dances or shuffles feet)

49

Y C

All blues ta ta ta ta ta

half-valve gliss. ("smear") *tap* *Play*

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Hn.

Tbn.

Tuba

*half-valve gliss. ("smear")* *half-valve gliss. ("smear")* *half-valve gliss. ("smear")* *half-valve gliss. ("smear")* *tap* *Play* *tap* *Play* *tap* *Play* *tap* *Play*

\* Iconic American jazz trumpeter  
 \*\*Tap instrument gleefully, for the audience to see.  
 Walker | *Shoe Jazz* | 3. Shoe Jazz Blue Jazz

54

Y C ta ta ta ta\_ ta ta ta ta\_ ta ta ta ta\_ ta ta ta ta\_

tap Play tap Play tap Play tap Play

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Hn.

Tbn.

Tuba

59 **F** *p* whispered gleefully, not on pitch

Y C Green Blue Red

Plunger mute + *p*

Plunger mute + *p*

Mute with hand + *p*

Plunger mute + *p*

tap *p*

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Hn.

Tbn.

Tuba

65

Y C Chorus exclaims *f* Clap hands

Good news!

Open *f*

Open *f*

Open *f*

Open *f*

Play *f*

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Hn.

Tbn.

Tuba

# 4. I Know the Song the Moon Sings

Moderate tempo ♩ = 108  
(straight eighths)

St. mute, shimmering, as moonlight

*p*

St. mute, shimmering, as moonlight

*p*

5

(Open)

*mf cantabile*

10

Mute with hand

*p*

15

19 **A** *p* gently, as moonbeams

Y  
C

I know the song The moon sings— Though she on - ly sings To moon - beams And to

(*p*)

(*p*)

(Muted)

(*p*)

St. mute

Tbn. *p* lightly tongued

Muted

Tuba *p*



23

Y  
C

all the stars That twin-kle In the night\_\_\_\_\_

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Hn.

Tbn.

Tuba

27

Y  
C

Some voices  
(p) smoothly

Others answer  
pp

moon - - - beams, - moon - - - beams -

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Hn.

Tbn.

Tuba

pp

pp

pp

pp

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

32

Y  
C

I know the song Her heart hears -

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Hn.

Tbn.

Tuba

B

p

mf

p

p

p

p

p

\*Cue-sized notes are an *ossia* for lower voices.

92 *(cresc.)* *f*

Y C Blue shoes Red shoes Good news Your shoes Her shoes

Tpt. 1 *(cresc.)* *f*

Tpt. 2 *(cresc.)* *f*

Hn. *(cresc.)* *f*

Tbn. *(cresc.)* *f*

Tuba *(cresc.)* *f*

97

Y C My shoes My shoes My shoes

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Hn.

Tbn.

Tuba

All brass make non-pitched vocal sounds with singer or tap instrument

102

Y C Jazz shoes! ta ta ta

Tpt. 1 half-valve gliss. ("smear") (ta ta ta)

Tpt. 2 half-valve gliss. ("smear") (ta ta ta)

Hn. half-valve gliss. ("smear") (ta ta ta)

Tbn. half-valve gliss. ("smear") (ta ta ta)

Tuba half-valve gliss. ("smear") (ta ta ta)