

Gwyneth Walker

The Grace of the World

The poems of Wendell Berry

for High Voice and Piano



1. The Peace of Wild Things
2. Let Us Meet Here Together
3. The Timbered Choir

The Grace of the World

duration: 7 minutes 30 seconds

The poetry of Wendell Berry (b. 1934) is profoundly and beautifully *American*. These words portray the rural landscape, and the creatures who dwell thereon. Natural patterns of worship unfold. The trees (great trees) form a *Timbered Choir* to surround a Meeting Room in the forest. Birds (hopping birds) fill the congregation: *light, leaf, foot, hand and wing – such order as we know*. And over all comes a peace, *The Peace of Wild Things*.

The musical settings use a simple and sparse language, in keeping with the style of the poems. A solo piano line, marked *as a solitary bird in the distance*, opens and closes the first song. The gathering for worship (second song) is often filled with sustained chords (as a group together). Or, the little birds hop about with staccato chords (and many rests!).

Throughout the songs, the vocal line aims primarily for clarity of expression of the text. This is an unadorned message: *I rest in the grace of the world, and am free*.

The Peace of Wild Things

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my
 children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water,
 and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

Let Us Meet Here Together

The dark around us, me,
Let us meet here together,
Members one of another,
Here in our holy room,

Here on our little floor,
Here in the daylight sky,
Rejoicing mind and eye,
Rejoining known and knower,

Light, leaf, foot, hand, and wing,
Such order as we know,
One household, high and low,
And all the earth shall sing.

The Timbered Choir

Slowly, slowly they return
To the small woodland let alone:
Great trees, outspreading and bright,
Apostles of the living light

Patient as stars, they build in air
Tier after tier a timbered choir,
Stout beams upholding weightless grace
Of song, a blessing on this place.

They stand in waiting all around,
Uprisings of their native ground.
Downcomings of the distant light;
They are the advent they await.

Receiving sun and giving shade,
Their life's a benefaction made,
And is a benediction said
Over the living and the dead.

In all their brightened leaves, released,
Fly down the wind, and we are pleased
To walk on radiance, amazed.
O light come down to earth, be praised!

The Grace of the World

[poems of Wendell Berry]

1. The Peace of Wild Things

"I rest in the grace of the world... and am free"

Wendell Berry (b. 1934)

Gwyneth Walker

Moderate tempo ♩ = 100
lightly, as a solitary bird in the distance

Piano *p* *pp* *p*

8^{va} *loco*

with slight pedal

5 *mf espr.*

When des -

ped. *simile*

8 **A**

pair for the world grows in me and I

A

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11

wake in the night at the least sound _____ in

14

fear of what my life and my chil - dren's lives may be, _____

17

p *(p) reverently*

I go, I _____

with pedal

21

go, I go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his beau-ty on the

B

25 *mf*

wa - ter, and the great her - on feeds, the great her - on feeds.

Ped.

28 **C** *p* (*p*)

I come in - to the peace of wild things who

with pedal

32

do not tax their lives with fore - thought of grief. I

34 **D**

come in - to the pres - ence of still wa - ter. And I feel a - bove me the day - blind

D

38 *rit.* *mf*

stars wait - ing with their light. For a

rit.

Lead.

41 **E** Slower

time I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

E Slower *mf*

Lead.

45 *a tempo* (♩ = 100) *p*

I

a tempo (♩ = 100) *p*

(Lead.)

49 **F**

go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his beau-ty on the wa - ter. I

53

rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

Ped.

57

rit.

rit.

Ped. Ped. Ped.

2. Let Us Meet Here Together

"And all the earth shall sing"

Wendell Berry (b. 1934)

Slowly and peacefully ♩ = 100 *p* reverently, almost whispered

Voice

The dark a-round us, come, Let us meet here to-

Piano

Slowly and peacefully ♩ = 100

p

6

geth - er, Mem - bers of one an - oth - er, Here in our ho - ly room,

A *accel.*

ll cresc.

Here on our lit - tle floor, Here in the day - lit sky, Re -

A *accel.*

cresc.

15 (*accel.*) **Faster** ♩ = 120 *rit.*

joic - ing mind and eye, Re - join - ing known and know - er,

(*accel.*) **Faster** ♩ = 120 *rit.*

mf

B ♩ = 100

19 *sub. p* *lightly, as birds hopping*

Light, leaf, foot, hand, and wing, Such ord - er as we know, One

B ♩ = 100
lightly, as birds hopping

sub. p

24

house - hold, high and low, And all the

with slight pedal

28 *cresc.* *mf*

earth, the earth shall sing, sing.

cresc. *mf*

Ped.

32 *accel. cresc.* C **Faster** ♩ = 120 *f*

ah, Here on our lit - tle floor,

accel. C **Faster** ♩ = 120 *f*

Here in the day - lit sky, Re - joic - ing mind and eye, Re -

36 *rit.* D ♩ = 100 *sub. p* *lightly, as birds hopping*

join - ing known and know - er, Light, leaf, foot, hand, and

rit. D ♩ = 100 *lightly, as birds hopping* *sub. p*

wing, And all the earth, the

accel. cresc. *accel.* *cresc.* *with pedal*

And all the earth, the

48 *(accel.)* *(cresc.)* **E** **Faster, in celebration** ♩ = 120 *f*

earth shall sing, sing,

(accel.) **E** **Faster, in celebration** ♩ = 120 *f*

(cresc.) *loco*

8va *Loco.* *Loco.* *Loco.* *Loco.*

51

sing,

8va *loco* *loco*

Loco. *Loco.* *Loco.*

54

sing.

rit. *ff*

rit.

8va

(Loco.) *Loco.* *V* *V* *V* *8va*

3. The Timbered Choir

“Great Trees – Apostles of the living light”

Wendell Berry (b. 1934)

At a slow, stately tempo ♩ = 66 *p* **A**

Voice

Slow - ly, slow-ly they re - turn To the

At a slow, stately tempo ♩ = 66 *p* **A**

Piano

8va

with slight pedal

5 **B**

small wood - land let a - lone: Great trees, out - spread - ing and bright. A -

loco **B**

more pedal

9 *poco accel.* **C** ♩ = 72 *mp*

pos - tles of the liv - ing light. Pa - tient as stars, they build in air

poco accel. **C** ♩ = 72 *mp*

ped. *simile*

13

Tier af-ter tier a tim-bered choir, Stout beams up-hold-ing weight-less grace of

17

accel. **D** Faster ♩ = 80 *mf*

song, a bless-ing on this place. They stand in wait-ing all a-round,

accel. **D** Faster ♩ = 80 *mf*

21

rit. **E** Slower *f*

up-ris-ings of their na-tive ground. Down-com-ings of the dis-tant

E Slower *f*

24

mf

light; They are the ad-vent they a-wait!

mf

(*rit.*)

27 **F** ♩ = 80

p tenderly

Re -

Ped. *simile* *dim.*

31 **G** Moderately ♩ = 72

ceiv-ing sun and giv-ing shade, Their life's a ben-e-fac-tion made, And is a

p *cresc.*

35

mf

ben-e-dic-tion said O-ver the liv-ing and the dead. In

mf

38 **H**

fall their bright-ened leaves, re-leased, Fly

Ped.

39

down the wind, and we are pleased _____ To

40

p sub., (*p*)

walk on ra - diance, a - mazed. O light come down to earth, O

42

accel.

light come down to earth, O light come down to earth, be

I **Faster** ♩ = 80, *in celebration*

44 *f*

praised, O light, be praised, O light, be

I **Faster** ♩ = 80, *in celebration*

f

ped.

46

praised, be praised, O light come down to

ped.

48

earth be praised!

rit.

rit.

f

ped.