

GWYNETH WALKER

Three Days by the Sea

for SATB Chorus and Orchestra

1. The Bottom of the Sea
2. Gifts from the Sea
3. Down to the Sea

Commissioned by the Key Chorale, in celebration of their 20th season, 2005.

Premiered by the Key Chorale, April 17, 2005, Sarasota, FL.

Daniel Moe – Music Director.

Duration: 11'30"

The sea is a universal force which speaks to each of us in unique ways. Thus, these texts, by three different authors, were selected for this choral work. It is intended that a diversity of aspects of the sea be explored.

THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA (poem by Thomas Merton) is a product of imagination – the ocean floor, the home of mermaids, “where waters most lock music in,” a dimly-lit room where “lost orchestras play.” [The orchestras play a waltz.] This song is characterized by descending lines into the depths of the orchestral and choral ranges. The tuba is a featured instrument in these “descents.” A pair of piccolos open the movement, portraying a school of fish in the ocean.

GIFTS FROM THE SEA (poem by Anne Morrow Lindbergh) are found on the beach. One might find shells, perhaps the shell of a hermit crab. [The oboe and bassoon play hermit crab motives.] One might also find simplicity. Patience and faith come from the sea. “One should lie empty, open, choiceless as a beach.”

Norah Mary Holland, a Canadian poet, cousin of W.B. Yeats, provides the lyrics for the closing song, *DOWN TO THE SEA*. Here is the dark, strong, passionate sea, the “waters, wild and wide.” This is sustained and powerful music, with the rolling sea often portrayed by the string arpeggios and the surging wave patterns in the woodwinds and brass.

A love and a fear of the sea are combined. “O strong and terrible Mother Sea, let me lie once more on your cool white breast.” There is no home on the land. In the final voyage, “I will go down to the sea again.”

Performance Note:

It is suggested that each of the poems (texts) be read aloud before the performance of each song. This will allow the audience to have abundant familiarity with the beautiful lyrics, and the readings themselves will become part of the expression of the words. With this in mind, the poems are printed in the choral octavos.

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.

Gwyneth Walker has been a proud resident of Vermont for many years. She is the recipient of the Year 2000 “Lifetime Achievement Award” from the Vermont Arts Council as well as the 2008 “Athenaeum Award for Achievement in the Arts and Humanities” from the St. Johnsbury (VT) Athenaeum. In 2012, she was elected as a Fellow of the Vermont Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Walker’s catalog includes over 300 commissioned works for orchestra, chamber ensembles, chorus, and solo voice. A special interest has been dramatic works that combine music with readings, acting, and movement. The music of Gwyneth Walker is published by E. C. Schirmer (choral and vocal music) and Lauren Keiser Music (orchestral and instrumental music).

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