

Gwyneth Walker

Trails and Open Spaces

for String Quartet

1. | Go to the Woods
2. Trail ~ Winding Path
3. Pond ~ a Stillness, Creatures
4. Dew on the Cobwebs
5. Gratitude

Trails and Open Spaces

duration: 13:40

Notes

Trails and Open Spaces for String Quartet is a suite of short “excursions” inspired by the hiking trails and open land in the composer’s home town of New Canaan, CT. Various woodland acres, ponds and paths have been set aside for the natural enjoyment of the residents. And this composer has explored them all!

While hiking the trails, words of New England naturalist H. D. Thoreau come to mind. Therefore, selections of Thoreau texts have been included in the musical score for possible reading before the playing of each movement.

I Go to the Woods is “setting out on a walk” music. The style is light and rhythmic, with energy and joy. The Violin then introduces the “Woodland theme.” How gentle and clean are these phrases! The key of A Major (bright) seems well-suited. Intermediate sections are flowing (one may walk past a brook) and very sparse and rhythmic, with the energy of walking in the woods. The “Woodland theme” returns leading to a quiet ending.

Trail – Winding Path features a gentle theme in Viola, leading to triplet patterns, perhaps reflective of the winding path.

Shimmering tremoli, sul tasto, are inspired by the surface of the pond – still, yet glistening. Later the *tremolo* shift to a scratchy *sul ponticello*, as insects are heard. Glissandi reflect the smoothness of the pond’s surface.

“Everywhere there is dew on the cobwebs!” Short glissandi, “wisps of sound,” are the cobwebs. A 3/8 dance follows, as if to suggest the rhythm of exclaiming “Everywhere, everywhere, cobwebs!”

Gratitude is the most extended of the movements, for the composer is truly grateful for the open land. Descending scales (blessings) open the music. Then, Violin 1 enters with the “I am grateful” stepwise theme. The “pure” key of C Major was chosen for this simple expression. A middle section is rhythmic, with tapping on the body of the instruments. This may be heard as branches, or light woodland sounds. The theme returns, now with a counterpoint of “cascading scales of overflowing gratitude” in the Viola. The final ascending run in Violin 1 ends with the stepwise “I am grateful” motive. As the composer has written, “here I can walk in peace. Thank you.”

The Readings

Optional Readings before the playing of each movement

– from the writings of Henry David Thoreau (adapted by Gwyneth Walker)

1. | Go to the Woods

I go to the woods because I wish to live deliberately, to face only the essential facts of life, and see if I cannot learn what it has to teach, and not, when I come to die, discover that I have not lived. I do not wish to live what is not life, living is so dear, nor do I wish to practice resignation, unless it is quite necessary. I want to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life – to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.

I do not know that the woods are ever more beautiful, or affect me more!

2. Trail – Winding Path

Remember thy creator in the days of thy youth. Rise free from care before the dawn and seek adventures. Let the noon find thee by other lakes, and the night overtake thee everywhere at home. Grow wild according to thy nature. Let the thunder rumble. Take shelter under the cloud. Enjoy the land, but own it not.

3. Pond – a Stillness, Creatures

I want to go soon and live away by the pond, where I shall hear only the wind whispering among the reeds. It will be enough if I shall leave myself behind. I seek acquaintance with Nature, to know her moods and her manners. I wish to know an entire heaven, and an entire earth!

4. Dew on the Cobwebs

Everywhere there is dew on the cobwebs, little gossamer veils, or scarfs as big as your hand. They were dropped from the fairy shoulders that danced on the grass last night.

5. Gratitude

words of Gwyneth Walker

(reader or performers may offer their own thanks instead)

I am thankful... for every drop of rain, every passing cloud, every silent tree.
I am thankful... for the morning light, the noonday breeze, the growing calm.
I am thankful... for this open land – for here I can walk in peace. Thank you.

The Composer

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 before returning to live in her childhood hometown of New Canaan, Connecticut.

A composer since age two, Gwyneth Walker has always placed great value on writing in a broad array of genres. More than 400 commissioned works for orchestra, chamber ensembles, solo instruments, chorus, and solo voice have been created – all arising from the impetus of performers and collaboration with musicians. Over the decades, she has traveled throughout North America to attend performances of her works and to meet her musician colleagues.

Gwyneth Walker is a proud resident of New England. She was the recipient of the 2000 “Lifetime Achievement Award” from the Vermont Arts Council and the 2018 “Alfred Nash Patterson Lifetime Achievement Award” from Choral Arts New England. In 2020, *her alma mater*, the Hartt School of Music of the University of Hartford, presented her with the Hartt Alumni Award.

Walker’s catalog includes musical works of many sorts: arrangements of traditional folk songs; original music in both vocal and instrumental genres inspired by great American poetry; dramatic works that combine music with readings, acting, and movement; works for student performers of all ages; and large-scale pieces for professional players and ensembles. The music of Gwyneth Walker is published by E.C. Schirmer (choral/vocal/instrumental music) and Lauren Keiser Music (orchestral/instrumental music).

Further information concerning Gwyneth Walker and her works is available at:

www.gwynethwalker.com

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Trails and Open Spaces

for String Quartet

Gwyneth Walker

1. I Go to the Woods

[May be read aloud before the playing of the first movement]

I go to the woods because I wish to live deliberately, to face only the essential facts of life, and see if I cannot learn what it has to teach, and not, when I come to die, discover that I have not lived. I do not wish to live what is not life, living is so dear; nor do I wish to practice resignation, unless it is quite necessary. I want to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life – to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.

I do not know that the woods are ever more beautiful, or affect me more!

– H. D. Thoreau

With the joy of starting a journey (♩ = 126)

The first system of the musical score is for a string quartet in A major, 4/4 time. It consists of four staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 126. The first two measures are rests for all instruments. The third measure begins with a dynamic marking of *p* (piano) and the instruction *lightly*. Above the Violin 1 and 2 staves, there are small square accents and 'V' markings. The Violoncello part has a *p* marking. The music features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.

5 A "woodland" theme

The second system of the musical score starts at measure 5. It features a section labeled 'A' with a boxed 'A' above it, which is the "woodland" theme. The notation continues for Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello. The Violin 1 part has a melodic line with eighth notes and a half note. The Violin 2 part has a similar rhythmic pattern. The Viola part has a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The Violoncello part continues with the same rhythmic pattern as in the first system.

9

Vln. 1 *pizz.* *arco*

Vln. 2 *pizz.* *arco*

Vla.

Vcl.

14 **B**

Vln. 1 *mf*

Vln. 2 *mf*

Vla. *mf*

Vcl. *mf*

18 *pizz.* *arco*

Vln. 1 *pizz.* *arco*

Vln. 2 *pizz.* *arco*

Vla.

Vcl.

22 **C**

Vln. 1 *flowing*

Vln. 2 *flowing*

Vla. *pizz.* *flowing*

Vcl. *arco*

27 D

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

f

f

f

f

32

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

(with Vln. 1)

36

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

40 E *(a tempo) very light and rhythmic*

(no rit.)

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

dim. poco a poco

p

dim. poco a poco

p

dim. poco a poco

p

dim. poco a poco

p

(with Vla.)

(p)

45

45
(p)

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 45 to 48. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#). The time signature is 4/4. Vln. 1 starts with a half rest in measure 45, then plays a dotted quarter note in measure 46, and continues with a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes and eighth notes. Vln. 2 is silent in measure 45 and enters in measure 46 with a quarter note. Vla. plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment. Vlc. plays a dotted quarter note in measure 45 and continues with a rhythmic pattern. A dynamic marking of (p) is present in measure 45.

49

49
cresc. poco a poco (to F)

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 49 to 53. The key signature is two sharps. The time signature is 4/4. Vln. 1 and Vln. 2 play a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes and eighth notes. Vla. plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment. Vlc. plays a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes and eighth notes. A dynamic marking of cresc. poco a poco (to F) is present in measure 50 for all parts.

54

54
(cresc.)

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 54 to 57. The key signature is two sharps. The time signature is 4/4. Vln. 1, Vln. 2, and Vla. play a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes and eighth notes. Vlc. plays a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes and eighth notes. A dynamic marking of (cresc.) is present in measure 54 for all parts. Trills are indicated with a '3' in measures 56 and 57.

58

58
F

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 58 to 61. The key signature is two sharps. The time signature is 4/4. A box containing the letter 'F' is positioned above measure 58. Vln. 1, Vln. 2, and Vla. play a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes and eighth notes. Vlc. plays a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes and eighth notes. A dynamic marking of (cresc.) is present in measure 58 for all parts. A dynamic marking of f is present in measure 59 for all parts. Trills are indicated with a '3' in measures 58 and 60.

62

Vln. 1

Vln. 2 (with Vln. 1)

Vla.

Vcl.

66

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

G

dim. poco a poco

dim. poco a poco

dim. poco a poco

dim. poco a poco

70

Vln. 1 (dim.)

Vln. 2 (dim.)

Vla. (dim.)

Vcl. (dim.)

poco rit.

p

p

p

p

74

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

Slightly slower

rit.

(p)

(p)

(p)

(p)

2. Trail – Winding Path

Remember thy creator in the days of thy youth. Rise free from care before the dawn and seek adventures. Let the noon find thee by other lakes, and the night overtake thee everywhere at home. Grow wild according to thy nature. Let the thunder rumble. Take shelter under the cloud. Enjoy the land, but own it not.

– H. D. Thoreau

Flowing (♩ = 132), *as a trail in the woods*

Violin 1 *p*

Violin 2 *p*

Viola

Violoncello *p*

7 A *pizz.*

Vln. 1 *pizz.*

Vln. 2 *pizz.*

Vla. *p gently* *pizz.*

Vlc.

14 *arco* *pizz.* *arco*

Vln. 1 *arco* *pizz.* *arco*

Vln. 2 *arco* *pizz.* *arco*

Vla. *arco* *pizz.* *arco*

Vlc. *arco* *pizz.* *arco*

21

Vln. 1 *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.*

Vln. 2 *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.*

Vla. *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.*

Vcl. *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.*

27

Vln. 1 *arco*

Vln. 2 *arco*

Vla. *arco*

Vcl. *arco*

33

B

Vln. 1 *mp*

Vln. 2 *mp*

Vla. *mp legato*

Vcl. *mp legato*

40

Vln. 1 *poco cresc.*

Vln. 2 *poco cresc.*

Vla.

Vcl.

47 C

Vln. 1 *(cresc.)* *mf*

Vln. 2 *poco cresc.* *mf*

Vla. *poco cresc.* *mf*

Vcl. *poco cresc.* *mf*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 47 through 52. It features four staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). Measure 47 starts with a dynamic of *f* and a *(cresc.)* marking. The Viola and Violoncello parts have *poco cresc.* markings. The system concludes with a *mf* dynamic and a boxed letter 'C' in the top right corner.

53

Vln. 1 *(mf)*

Vln. 2 *(mf)*

Vla.

Vcl. *pizz.*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 53 through 59. The Violin 1 and Violin 2 parts have *(mf)* dynamics. The Viola part is mostly silent with some chords. The Violoncello part has a *pizz.* (pizzicato) marking in measure 59.

60

Vln. 1 *p*

Vln. 2 *p*

Vla. *p*

Vcl. *p* *arco*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 60 through 66. All string parts (Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello) are marked with a *p* (piano) dynamic. The Violoncello part has an *arco* marking in measure 66.

67 D

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 67 through 72. It features four staves. Measures 67-72 are characterized by triplets in all string parts. A boxed letter 'D' is located in the top left corner of the system.

72

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

cresc. poco a poco (to E)

cresc. poco a poco (to E)

cresc. poco a poco (to E)

cresc. poco a poco (to E)

77

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

(cresc.)

(cresc.)

(cresc.)

(cresc.)

82

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

(cresc.)

(cresc.)

(cresc.)

(cresc.)

f

f

f

f

87 **E**

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Suddenly peaceful (♩ = 108)

93

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vcl.

p

V V 3

Detailed description: This system contains measures 93 through 98. It features four staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello. Measures 93-94 show the beginning of the section with a key signature of one flat and a tempo of 108 quarter notes per minute. The Viola part has a dynamic marking of *p*. Measures 95-98 show the continuation of the piece, with the Viola part featuring a melodic line with slurs and a fermata. The Violoncello part has some triplets and slurs.

99

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vcl.

p

p

Detailed description: This system contains measures 99 through 103. The Violin 1 and Violin 2 parts are mostly silent. The Viola part has a dynamic marking of *p* and features a complex rhythmic pattern with many triplets and slurs. The Violoncello part has a dynamic marking of *p* and features a simple melodic line.

104

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vcl.

p

rit.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 104 through 108. The Violin 1 and Violin 2 parts have a dynamic marking of *p* and feature melodic lines with slurs. The Viola part has a dynamic marking of *p* and features a melodic line with slurs and a fermata. The Violoncello part has a dynamic marking of *p* and features a melodic line with slurs. The section ends with a *rit.* (ritardando) marking.

2:30
February 5, 2022
New Canaan, Connecticut

3. Pond – a Stillness, Creatures

I want to go soon and live away by the pond, where I shall hear only the wind whispering among the reeds. It will be enough if I shall leave myself behind. I seek acquaintance with Nature, to know her moods and her manners. I wish to know an entire heaven, and an entire earth!

– H. D. Thoreau

Peaceful (♩ = 72)
sul tasto

Violin 1
p

Violin 2
p

Viola
sul tasto
shimmering
p

Violoncello
sul tasto
shimmering
p

7

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

13

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

rit.

a tempo (♩. = 72)

ord.

19

Vln. 1 (p)

Vln. 2 (p)

Vla.

Vcl.

A *Light and playful* (♩. = 72)

23

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla. ord. (p)

Vcl. ord. (p)

28

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

cresc. poco a poco

B

33

Vln. 1 (cresc.)

Vln. 2 (cresc.)

Vla. (cresc.)

Vcl. (cresc.)

f

pizz.

p

38

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

arco

f

pizz.

43 **C**

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

lightly separate

arco

lightly separate

mf

mf

49

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

f

mp

pizz.

rit.

Slower (♩ = 58), suddenly peaceful

54 **D** *a tempo* (♩ = 72), the pond at dusk

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

p

arco, sul pont.

p

p

dark, sensuous tone

mf

p

(to suggest a firefly or insect)

60

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vcl.

66 **E**

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vcl.

ord.
mf

71

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vcl.

mf
mf

76 *rit.* **F** Slower (♩ = 58)

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vcl.

mf
mf
mf

81

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

mf

dim. poco a poco

dim. poco a poco

dim. poco a poco

dim. poco a poco

87

G

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

(dim.)

(dim.)

(dim.)

(dim.)

p

p

p

p

93

rit.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

(p)

(p)

p

p

rit.

3:20
February 14, 2022
New Canaan, Connecticut

4. Dew on the Cobwebs

Everywhere there is dew on the cobwebs, little gossamer veils, or scarfs as big as your hand. They were dropped from the fairy shoulders that danced on the grass last night.

– H. D. Thoreau

“wisps of sound” are light, short, up-bow *glissandi*, pitches *ad lib.*)

♩ = 100
 (a playful dialogue)
 ascending wisps of sound to suggest “Dew on the Cobwebs”
con sord.

p

rit.

(a playful dialogue)
 ascending wisps of sound to suggest “Dew on the Cobwebs”
con sord.

p

ascending wisps of sound
con sord.

p

ascending wisps of sound
con sord.

p

5 **♩. = 66 (♩ = ♩)**

pizz. *(p)* *arco* *(p)* *mf joyous*

pizz. *(p)* *arco* *(p)* *mf joyous*

pizz. *(p)* *arco* *(p)* *mf joyous*

pizz. *(p)* *arco* *(p)* *mf joyous*

(p) *mf joyous*

a single “wisp” **A**

14

23 B

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vcl.

(mf)

(mf)

(mf)

as if in the distance
32

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vcl.

pp

40 C

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vcl.

mf

mf

49

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vcl.

p playful

p playful

p playful

p

pizz.

mf

mf

mf arco

57 **D**

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

65 *pizz.* **E** *playful "wisps" section, ad lib. arco*

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

p

74 **F**

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

pizz.

arco, "wisps"

(same rhythm as Vln. 1, pitches *ad lib.*)

83 **G** *Very playful*

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

arco, "wisps"

(same rhythm as Vlns., pitches *ad lib.*)

91

"wisps" (pitches and rhythms may vary)

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

arco

99

I

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

cresc.

f

107

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

J

115

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

p

via sord.

5. Gratitude

*I am thankful... for every drop of rain, every passing cloud, every silent tree.
I am thankful... for the morning light, the noonday breeze, the growing calm.
I am thankful... for this open land – for here I can walk in peace. Thank you.*

– Gwyneth Walker
(reader or performers may offer their own thanks instead)

Moderate tempo (♩ = 120), *flowing*
gently, as a blessing
senza sord.

Violin 1 *p* *senza sord.* *sost.*

Violin 2 *p* *senza sord.* *sost.*

Viola *p* *senza sord.* *sost.*

Violoncello *senza sord.* *sost.* *p*

7

Vln. 1 *mf cant.* *

Vln. 2

Vla. *mf*

Vlc. *mf*

13 **A**

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla. *mf*

Vlc. *mf*

* *gratitude* theme, suggestive of the words “I am thankful”

18 *feathery light* B

Vln. 1: *feathery light*, measures 18-21 with triplets.

Vln. 2: measure 20 has a note marked with an asterisk and *mf cant.*

Vla. and Vcl.: rhythmic accompaniment throughout.

22

Vln. 1: melodic line starting at measure 22.

Vln. 2: rhythmic accompaniment.

Vla. and Vcl.: rhythmic accompaniment.

26 C *Gentle rhythms*

Vln. 1 and 2: melodic lines with dynamics *p*.

Vla. and Vcl.: accompaniment with *pizz.* and *p* markings.

31

Vln. 1 and 2: melodic lines.

Vla. and Vcl.: accompaniment with *arco* marking.

* *gratitude* theme, suggestive of the words “I am thankful”

D

36

Vln. 1 *f*

Vln. 2 *f*

Vla. *f*

Vlc. *f*

41

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla. *p* *f* *p*

Vlc. *p* *f* *p*

45

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla. *f*

Vlc. *f*

E *Light and rhythmic (the woodlands)*

49 *(no rit.)* *tap body of instrument lightly with fingertip*

Vln. 1 *p* *tap body of instrument lightly with fingertip*

Vln. 2 *p* *tap body of instrument lightly with fingertip*

Vla. *p*

Vlc. *p*

54

arco

p

arco

p

F

59

63

G

67

cresc. poco a poco

cresc. poco a poco

cresc. poco a poco

cresc. poco a poco

72

Vln. 1 (cresc.) *mf*

Vln. 2 (cresc.) *mf*

Vla. (cresc.) *mf* *p* *mf*

Vlc. (cresc.) *mf* *p*

77

Vln. 1 *f*

Vln. 2 *f*

Vla. *f* a cascade of overflowing gratitude

Vlc. *f*

H

81

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

85

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

I

89

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

p

cresc. poco a poco

94

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

mp cresc.

f

p

(cresc.)

f

p

(cresc.)

f

p

99

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

f

p

f

p

(p)

f

p

f

p

104

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

p

pp

pp

pp

pp

rit.