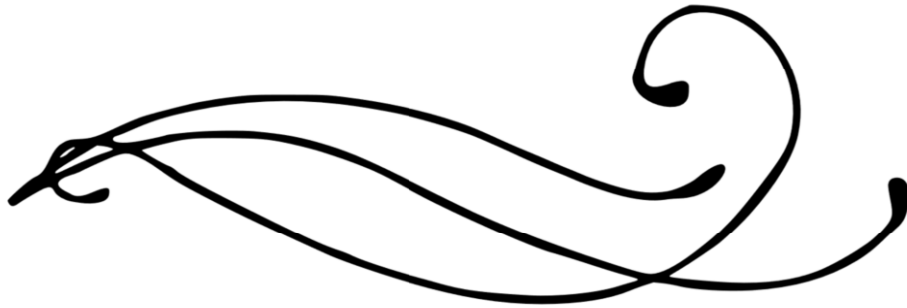


Gwyneth Walker

One Song

for SATB Chorus and Piano



based on the Robert Lax poem

there are not many songs

It is suggested that this poem be read aloud (perhaps by members of the chorus) before the music starts

there are not many songs
by Robert Lax

there are not many songs
there is one song

the animals lope to it
the fish swim in it
the sun circles it
the stars rise
the snow falls
the grass grows

there is no end to the song
and no beginning
the singer may die
but the song is forever

truth is the name of the song
and the song is truth

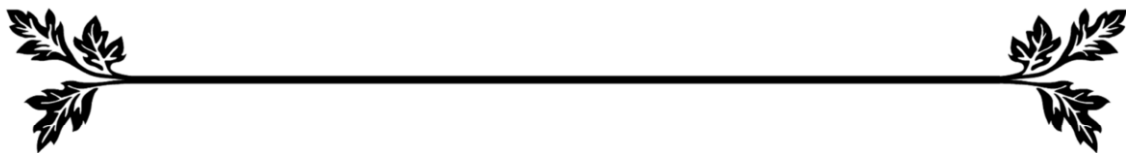


The Poet

Robert Lax (1915–2000) was born in Olean, New York. At Columbia University he studied with Mark Van Doren and became a lifelong friend of his classmate Thomas Merton (Trappist Monk, author). He then worked as a university lecturer, film critic, scriptwriter, and editor at the *New Yorker*. In 1962 he moved to the Greek Island of Patmos, where he spent the rest of his life living in solitude.

“Several people who knew Lax said he found what [his friend Thomas] Merton was looking for: a kind of solitude, simplicity, and peace that passes human understanding. What he – and Merton – found, he thought, was his own way of walking. His own way of singing the song. His own way of being pure act.”

– from *Pure Act, The Uncommon Life of Robert Lax*, by Michael McGregor



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.

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

www.gwynethwalker.com

One Song

duration: 3:50

*commissioned by the Richmond (VA) Choral Society
in celebration of their 75th concert season: 1947–2022*

premiered on June 5, 2022

Markus Compton, Artistic Director and Conductor

This commission is made possible by the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation



Notes

This sparse-yet-powerful poem by Robert Lax has a singular message – there is only one song, a song of the universe... the animals... the natural world. This is the song of truth.

In creating a musical setting, the composer has started with a piano introduction inspired by the wonderful image “the animals lope to it.” For here the music can bounce, or “lope away” with playful energy. The listener may hear leaping creatures, or swimming fish.

Individual voices then enter, answering one another with phrases about the sun, stars, snow, and grass. This dialogue grows into the full chorus singing the refrain “One Song.”

A middle section is emphatic. “There is no end to the song...the song is forever. Truth is the name of the song.” The closing words “and the song is truth” are conclusive, yet gentle. They lead to a return of the opening *animal motives* in the piano. The ending fades away, as repetitions of the word “forever” extend into the future.

The challenge of creating a choral setting of this text is that there are so very few words. The reward is that the words are exquisitely beautiful!

Music preparation by:

TUNESMITH MUSIC

PO Box 91435 | Louisville KY 40291 | (502)762-9219

www.tunesmithmusic.com

One Song

for SATB Chorus and Piano

Robert Lax (1915 - 2000)

Gwyneth Walker

♩ = 120 (light swing)

with a playful energy inspired by the text "the animals lope to it. . ."

Piano

p

Ped. _____ simile

4

mp

8

12

mf

15

19 A

S
A
T
B

p
hmm
p
hmm

p
hmm

A

ped. *ped.* *ped.* simile

Slower, freely (♩ = ca. 100)
(straight eighths)
a few voices (three groups of SA or Soli)

23 *rit.*

S
A
T
B

① *mf* there are not man-y songs
 ② *mf*
 not man-y

Slower, freely (♩ = ca. 100)
(straight eighths)

rit.

mf

ped.

27

S *mf* ③ not man - y songs

A songs

T *mf* ② One song

B *mf* ③ one song

① *mf* there is one song

a few voices (three groups of TB or Soli)

31

B *a tempo* (♩ = 120)
(swing eighths)

Solo or a few voices
mf with delight

S the an - i - mals lope to it

A

T

B *Solo or a few voices*
mf with delight

the fish

B *a tempo* (♩ = 120)
(swing eighths)
playful
(mf)

48

S
A
T
B

dim. *p*

hmm

unis. dim. *p*

hmm

dim. *p*

[conduct each syllable]

E Slower (♩ = ca. 100) (straight eighths)

52 *rit.*

S
A
T
B

f > > > > *sim.* ,

there is no end to the song and no be -

f > > > > *sim.* ,

there is no end to the song and no be -

f > > > > *sim.* ,

there is no end to the song and no be -

f > > > > *sim.* ,

there is no end to the song and no be -

E Slower (♩ = ca. 100) (straight eighths)

(with chorus)

rit.

f >

ped.

55

S
gin - ning the sing - er may die _____ but the song is for -

A
gin - ning the sing - er may die _____ but the song is for -

T
gin - ning the sing - er may die _____ but the song is for -

B
gin - ning the sing - er may die _____ but the song is for -

(Ped.)

div. 3

58

S
ev - er _____ truth is the name of the **F**
unis.

A
ev - er _____ truth is the name of the **F**
unis.

T
ev - er _____ truth is the name of the **F**

B
ev - er _____ truth is the name of the **F**

(Ped.)

3

a tempo (♩ = 120)
(swing eighths)

61

S
song and the song is truth

A
song and the song is truth

T
song and the song is truth

B
song and the song is truth

unis.

a tempo (♩ = 120)
(swing eighths)

65

G With growing excitement

S
-

A
- *p* the

T
p the grass grows

B
-

G With growing excitement

p

5 5 5 5

with more pedal

100 (last time) *rit.* *pp*

S ev - er, for - ev - er, for - ev - er, for - ev - er,

A ev - er, for - ev - er, for - ev - er, for - ev - er,

T ev - er, for - ev - er, for - ev - er, for - ev - er,

B ev - er, for - ev - er, for - ev - er, for - ev - er,

(last time) *rit.* *pp*

104 **Slower, grandly** (♩ = ca. 100) *cresc.* *div. f*

S Ah, for - ev - er.

A Ah, for - ev - er.

T Ah, for - ev - er.

B Ah, for - ev - er.

Slower, grandly (♩ = ca. 100) *cresc.* *f* *div.*