

Gwyneth Walker

Open My Heart with Song

musical settings of the poetry of
Rabindranath Tagore

for SATB Chorus and Piano

1. A Shower of Mercy
2. Closed Path
3. Heaven of Freedom

Open My Heart with Song

duration: circa 7 minutes

*Commissioned by the Mountainside Master Chorale, Dr. Sébastien Vallée, Music Director
in celebration of their 20th anniversary season: 1994-2014*

*Dedicated in loving memory of Mrs. Mary J. Rodgers, Mr. & Mrs. John R. Molinaro,
and Mr. & Mrs. Cleve Goring*

Premiered on March 1, 2014, in Pomona, California.

Open My Heart with Song is a set of three musical settings of the poetry of Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941). Each poem presents its own, uniquely beautiful images. Yet, common threads run throughout the cycle.

“A Shower of Mercy” speaks of the Lord’s healing power as gentleness (*a shower of mercy upon a parched heart*), exuberance (*a burst of song*), *peace and rest*, the *ceremony of a king*, and strength (*thy light and thy thunder*). This diversity inspires a range of musical language, from “cascading showers” in the accompaniment, to peaceful “chords of rest,” to forceful, choral “accents of thunder.”

A recurrent topic in Tagore’s poetry is that of the heart closed off from the fullness of the spiritual world (i.e., from *beyond*). This message is introduced in “A Shower of Mercy,” and continues with “Closed Path.” A solo voice, truly alone, expresses his exhaustion, feeling that his voyage has *come to its end*. Yet, through the Lord’s will, he finds *new melodies* breaking forth from his heart. Thus, the opening of the heart through song is a salvation. The full chorus joins the soloist as the pathway opens.

At the end of “Closed Path,” the soloist celebrates the transcendence into *new country*. This leads to the third movement, “Heaven of Freedom,” – a poem and song about *country* in a political sense. The poet hopes and prays for a new land (his native India) *where the mind is without fear and the head is held high*. This is not a world narrowed by *domestic walls*. There is openness and truth. *Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.*

This is truly inspiring poetry – reverent and celebratory. The musical settings aspire to the same exuberance and depth of truth as are expressed in the texts. The closing phrase of *let my country awake* seems very much as relevant today as it was a century ago.

1. A Shower of Mercy

When the heart is hard and parched up,
Come upon me with a shower of mercy.

When grace is lost from life,
Come with a burst of song.

When tumultuous work raises its din on all sides shutting me out from Beyond,
Come to me, my Lord of silence, with Thy peace and rest.

When my beggarly heart sits crouched, shut up in a corner,
Break open the door, my King, and come with the ceremony of a King.

When desire blinds the mind with delusion and dust, O Thou holy one, Thou wakeful,
Come with Thy light and Thy thunder

2. Closed Path

I thought that my voyage had come to its end
at the last limit of my power, –that the path before me was closed,
that provisions were exhausted
and the time come to take shelter in a silent obscurity.

But I find that Thy will knows no end in me.
And when old words die out on the tongue,
new melodies break forth from the heart;
and where the old tracks are lost,
new country is revealed with its wonders.

3. Heaven of Freedom

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high
Where knowledge is free
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments
By narrow domestic walls
Where words come out from the depth of truth
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit
Where the mind is led forward by thee
Into ever-widening thought and action
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) had early success as a writer in his native Bengal. With his translations of some of his poems he became rapidly known in the West. In fact, his fame attained a luminous height, taking him across continents on lecture tours and tours of friendship. In 1913 he was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature, the first non-European to achieve such an honor. For the world he became the voice of India's spiritual heritage; and for India, especially for Bengal, he became a great living institution.

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

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Open My Heart with Song

for SATB Choir and Piano

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)

Gwyneth Walker

1. A Shower of Mercy

Flowing ♩ = 112

Piano

p gently, to suggest a "shower of mercy"

with pedal

The piano introduction consists of a 4/4 measure with a flowing eighth-note melody in the right hand and a simple bass line in the left hand. The tempo is marked 'Flowing' with a quarter note equal to 112 beats. The dynamics are 'p' (piano) and the instruction is to play 'gently, to suggest a "shower of mercy"'. A 'with pedal' instruction is at the bottom.

Mezzo-Soprano Solo
mf

4

S

When the

The Mezzo-Soprano solo line begins at measure 4. The vocal line has a whole rest for the first two measures, then enters with the lyrics 'When the'. The piano accompaniment continues with a steady eighth-note pattern. The dynamic is 'mf' (mezzo-forte).

7 **A**

S

heart is hard and parched up, ——— come up - on me with a

A LH

Ped. ———

The second Mezzo-Soprano solo line starts at measure 7. It features a first ending bracket labeled 'A' over the first two measures. The lyrics are 'heart is hard and parched up, ——— come up - on me with a'. The piano accompaniment includes a 'LH' (left hand) instruction and a 'Ped.' (pedal) instruction with a line extending to the right.

10

S shower of mer - cy. a

A a shower of mer - cy.

a few voices p echo

p echo

(Ped.)

12

S shower of mer - cy.

A

B When grace is lost from

Bar. Solo mf

B

(Ped.)

14

B life, come with a burst of song.

a few voices p echo with a burst of

(Ped.)

17 *Tutti f* C

S When tu - mult rais - es its

A *Tutti f* When tu - mult rais - es its

T *a few voices p echo* *Tutti f*
 song. with a burst of song. When tu - mult rais - es its

B *Tutti f* When tu - mult rais - es its

C

(Ped.) Ped.

20 *poco rit.* *Slightly slower*

S *mf* *p , gently*
 din on all sides, shut - ting me out from be - yond, come to me, my

A *mf* *p , gently*
 din on all sides, shut - ting me out from be - yond, come to me, my

T *p gently*
 din on all sides, come to me, my

B *p gently*
 din on all sides, come to me, my

poco rit. *Slightly slower*

p

4

24 *rit.* **D** *a tempo* (♩ = 112)

S
lord of si - lence, with thy peace and rest.

A
lord of si - lence, with thy peace and rest.

T
lord of si - lence, with thy peace and rest.

B
lord of si - lence, with thy peace and rest.

rit. **D** *a tempo* (♩ = 112)

(p)

8th with pedal

28 *mf*

B
When the heart sits crouched, shut up in a cor - ner,

loco

31 *f*

T
break o - pen the door, and come with the cer - e - mo - ny of a

B
break o - pen the door, and come with the cer - e - mo - ny of a

f

34 *f* **E**

S When de - sire blinds the mind with de - lu - sion and dust, then ho - ly

A When de - sire blinds the mind with de - lu - sion and dust, then ho - ly

T King! _____

B King! _____

mf **E** *f*

Ped. _____

38

S one, thou wake - ful one, come with thy light and thy

A one, thou wake - ful one, come with thy light and thy

T then ho - ly one, thou wake - ful, come with thy light and thy

B then ho - ly one, thou wake - ful, come with thy light and thy

43

F **Triumphantly**

S
thun - der! _____ O - pen my heart with song.

A
thun - der! _____ O - pen my heart with song.

T
thun - der! _____ O - pen my heart with song. _____

B
thun - der! _____ O - pen my heart with song. _____

F **Triumphantly**

Ped. _____

Ped. _____

S
O - pen my heart with song. *rit.* O - pen my heart with song, and a shower of

A
O - pen my heart with song. O - pen my heart with song,

T
O - pen my heart with song. _____ O - pen my heart with song,

B
O - pen my heart with song. _____ O - pen my heart with song,

Slower gently

rit.

Slower

G *a tempo* (♩ = 112)

51 *p*

S mer - cy, _____ and a shower of mer - cy, _____

A _____ *p gently* and a shower of mer - cy, _____

T _____ *p gently* and a shower of mer - cy, _____ and a shower of

B _____ *p gently* and a shower of

G *a tempo* (♩ = 112)

p gently

with pedal

54

S _____ and a shower of mer - cy, a shower of mer - cy, a shower of

A _____ and a shower of mer - cy, a shower of mer - cy, a shower of

T mer - cy, _____

B mer - cy, _____ a shower of

rit. to end
Solo mf (from opening)

57

S
mer - cy, a shower of mer - cy, a shower of mer - cy, mer - cy, and a

A
mer - cy, a shower of mer - cy, a shower of mer - cy, mer - cy,

T
and a shower of mer - cy, mer - cy,

B
mer - cy, mer - cy, mer - cy,

rit. to end
8^{va}

60

S
(rit.) shower of mer - - - - cy.

A
mer - cy.

T
mer - cy.

B
mer - cy.

(rit.)
8^{va}

pp

Ped.

2. Closed Path

Slowly, as if setting out on a journey *poco accel.*

Piano

With motion ♩ = 100

5

Bar. Solo **A**

p with resignation

8

I thought that my voy - age had come to its end _____

11

at the last lim - it of my power, that the

14

B path be-fore me was closed, that pro - vis - ions_ were ex -

Ped.

17

B haust - ed, and the time had come to take

B

Ped.

20

B shel-ter in a si - lent ob - scur - i - ty. with more energy

mf

(Ped.) Ped. Ped. Ped.

24

B But I find that thy will knows no

mf espr., with optimism

C

Ped. Ped. Ped.

28

B

end in me. And when old words die out on the

Ped.

31

B

tongue, new melodies break forth from the heart;

Ped.

34

B

and where old tracks are lost, new

(Ped.)

accel. **Faster** ♩ = 112 **f**

37

B coun - try is re - vealed in its won - ders.

accel. **Faster** ♩ = 112 **f**

cresc.

Ped. Ped.

D

p *f* expressing wonder

40

S Ah

p *f* expressing wonder

A Ah

p *f* (*f*) expressing wonder

T Ah Ah

p *f* (*f*) expressing wonder

B Ah

Tutti Ah

D

(Ped.) Ped. Ped.

43

S Ah

A Ah

T Ah

B Ah

Ped. Ped. 8^{va} Ped.

46

S *ff* long

A *ff* long

T *ff* long

B *ff* long

hands raised above keyboard
long

ff let ring to fade

(Ped.)

3. Heaven of Freedom

Slowly ♩ = 60

pp hushed

Soprano
Alto

Where the mind is with-out fear and the head is held high; Where

pp hushed

Tenor
Bass

Where the mind is with-out fear and the head is held high; Where

Slowly ♩ = 60

pp

Piano

(Ped.)

4

poco cresc.

S
A

know - ledge is free; Where the world has not been bro - ken up in - to

poco cresc.

T
B

know - ledge is free; Where the world bro - ken up

Piano

6

(cresc.) *mf* **A Slightly faster** ♩ = 72

S
A

frag - ments by nar - row do - mest - ic walls; Where _ words come out from the

(cresc.) *mf*

T
B

frag - ments do - mest - ic walls; words _ come out from the

A Slightly faster ♩ = 72

Piano

mf

8

S *p*, *(p)* *rit.*
 depths of truth; — from the depths of truth; —

A *p*, *(p)*
 depths of truth; — from the depths of truth; —

T *p*, *(p)*
 depths of truth; — Where words come out from the depths of truth; —

B *p*, *(p)*
 depths of truth; — Where words come out from the depths of truth; —

p *rit.*

B *Faster* ♩ = 88, *with motion and intensity*

11 *mp* *mf* (*non dim.*)
 S Where tire-less stri-ving stret-ches its arms_ t'ward per-fec - tion; — Where the clear stream of rea-son

mp *mf* (*non dim.*)
 A Where tire-less stri-ving stret-ches its arms_ t'ward per-fec - tion; — Where the clear stream of rea-son

(p) unobtrusive *mf* *p*
 T Where... to per-fec-tion, where the clear...

(p) unobtrusive *mf* *p*
 B Where... to per-fec-tion, where the clear...

B *Faster* ♩ = 88, *with motion and intensity*

(p) *mf*

14 *rit.* *a tempo* (♩ = 88) *f*

S has not lost its way in - to the drear - y des - ert sand of dead hab - it; Where the

A has not lost its way in - to the drear - y des - ert sand of dead hab - it; Where the

T has not lost its way in - to the drear - y des - ert sand of dead hab - it;

B has not lost its way in - to the drear - y des - ert sand of dead hab - it;

rit. *a tempo* (♩ = 88) *f*

17 C *(f)*

S mind... in - to ac - tion...

A mind... in - to ac - tion...

T *mf* — *f* *mf*
Where the mind is led for - ward by thee in - to ev - er wid - ening

B *mf* — *f* *mf*
Where the mind is led for - ward by thee in - to ev - er wid - ening

C

rit. **D Slightly slower** ♩ = 72

f with strength

S in - to that heav'n of free-dom, that heav'n of free-dom, that

A in - to that heav'n of free-dom, that heav'n of free-dom, that

T *f* thought and ac - tion... *with strength* heav'n of free-dom, heav'n of free-dom,

B *f* thought and ac - tion... *with strength* heav'n of free-dom, heav'n of free-dom,

rit. **D Slightly slower** ♩ = 72

23 *accel.*

S heav'n of free-dom, my Fath-er, — let my coun-try a - wake.

A heav'n of free-dom, my Fath-er, — let my coun-try a - wake.

T heav'n of free-dom, my Fath-er, — let my coun-try a - wake.

B heav'n of free-dom, my Fath-er, — let my coun-try a - wake.

accel.

E With rhythmic energy ♩ = 88

26 *p sub.* *mp*

S Where the mind is with-out fear and the head is held

A *p sub.* *mp*

A Where the mind is with-out fear and the head is held

T *p sub.*

T 8 Hmm Where the mind is with-out fear

B *p sub.*

B 8 Hmm Where the mind is with-out fear

E With rhythmic energy ♩ = 88

p sub.

29 *mf* *rit.* *f* **Slowly, with conviction**

S high; Where words are spo-ken in truth; _____

A high; *mf* Where words are spo-ken in truth; _____ *f* in - to that

T *mp* and the head is held high; *mf* spo-ken in truth; *f* in - to that

B *mp* and the head is held high; *mf* spo-ken in truth; *f* in - to that

rit. **Slowly, with conviction**

mp *mf*

32 *(f)* *a tempo* (♩ = 88)

S my Fath - er, _____

A heav'n of free - dom, _____ *(f)*

T heav'n of free - dom, _____ Let my coun - try a - wake, a - wake, a -

B heav'n of free - dom, _____ Let my coun - try a - wake, a - wake,

a tempo (♩ = 88)

35 *(f)* *rit.* *ff*

S a - wake, a - wake, let my coun - try a - wake!

A wake, a - wake, a - wake, a - wake, let my coun - try a - wake!

T wake, a - wake, a - wake, a - wake, let my coun - try a - wake!

B a - wake, a - wake, a - wake, O let my coun - try a - wake!

rit.

8^{vb}