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

Open My Heart with Song

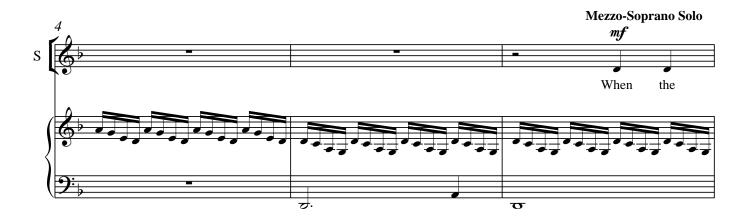
for SATB Choir and Piano

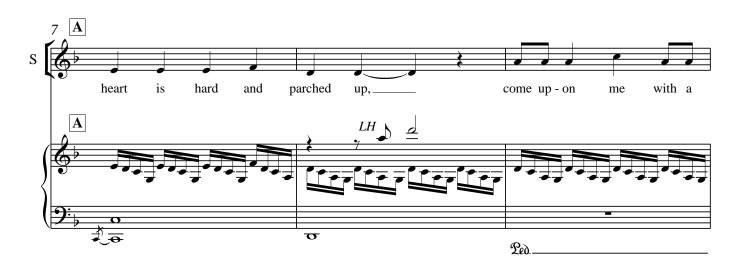
Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)

Gwyneth Walker

1. A Shower of Mercy













Walker / A Shower of Mercy





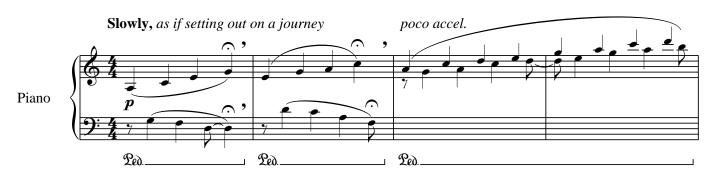
Walker / A Shower of Mercy

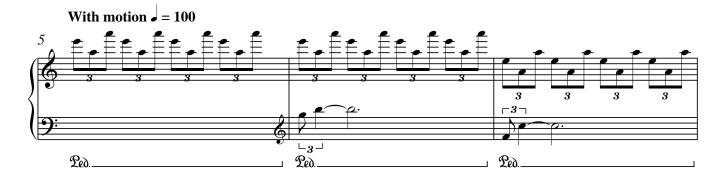


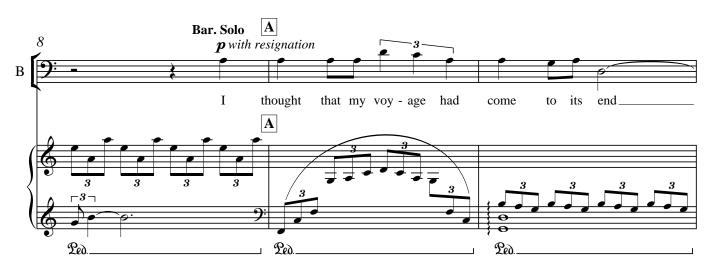


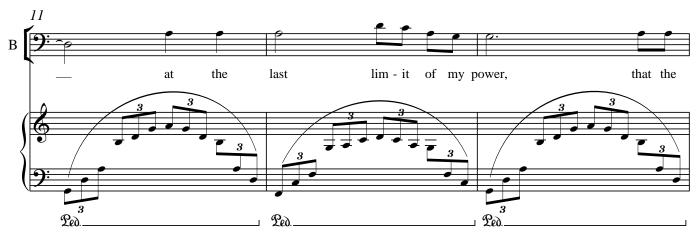


2. Closed Path





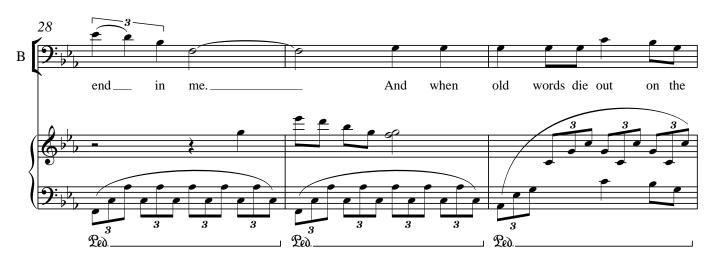


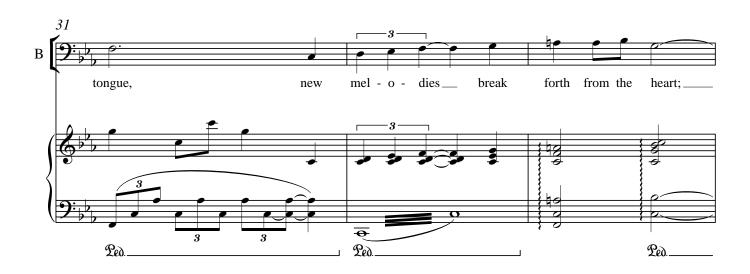


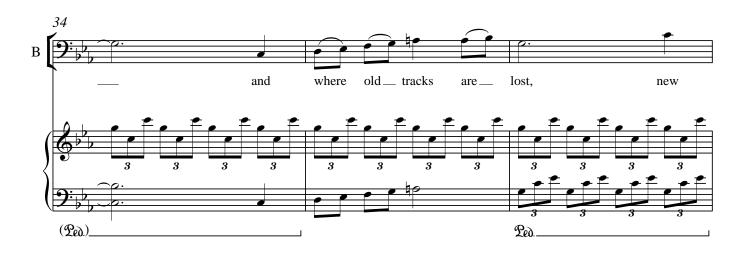
Walker / Closed Path

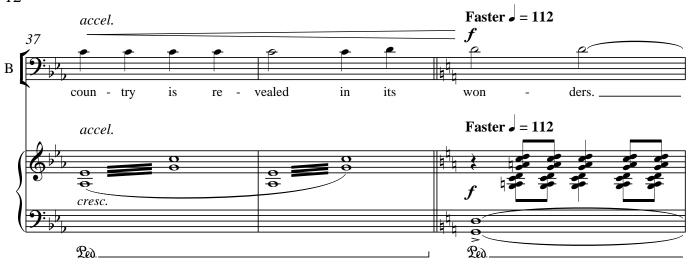


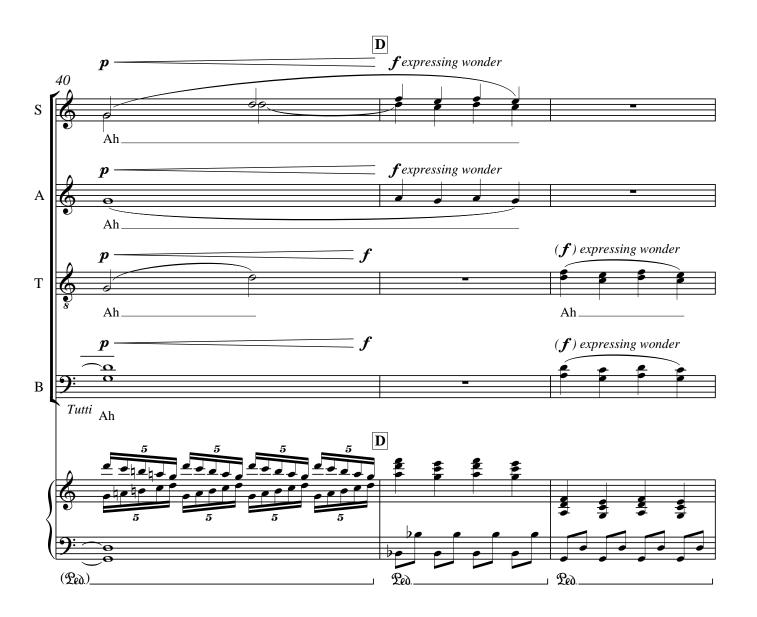
Walker / Closed Path

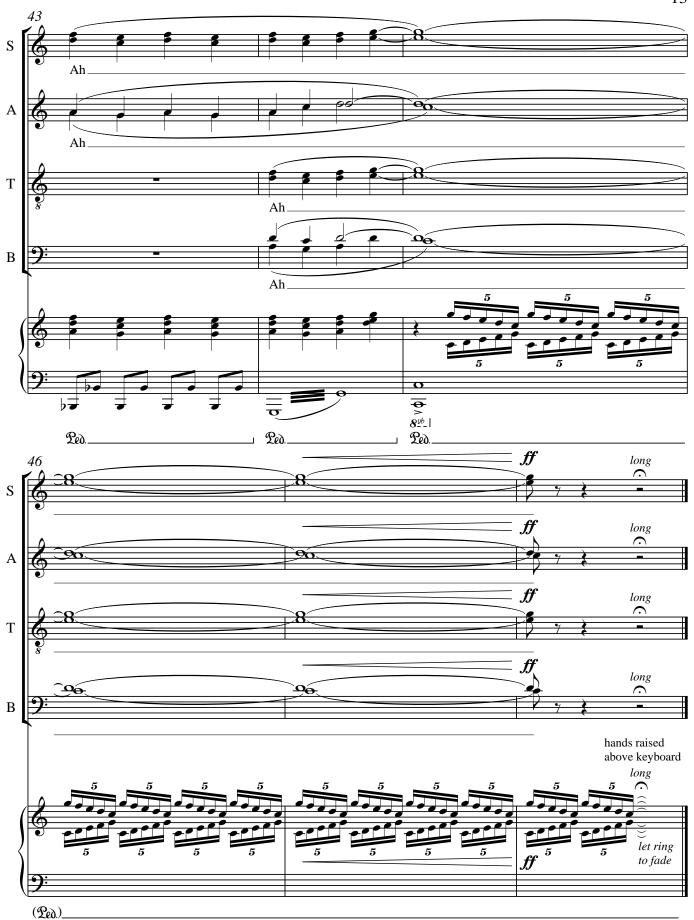


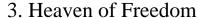




















Walker / Heaven of Freedom





2'15" / Total: 7'00"