

GWYNETH WALKER

Songs of Ecstasy

- | | | |
|---|-----------------|----------|
| → 1. Song: "When Rain Sings Light" | (SATB divisi) | No. 7933 |
| 2. A Psalm: "The Spirit Sings" | (SATB divisi) | No. 7934 |
| 3. Stranger: "Thou Inward Stranger
Whom I Have Never Seen" | (SATB divisi) | No. 7935 |
| Songs of Ecstasy | (Tenor & Organ) | No. 7936 |

Program Notes

Songs of Ecstasy are musical settings of three poems by Thomas Merton (1915–1968), a Trappist monk who lived for many years in solitude at the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky. Merton's writings express an imagination sparked by divine revelation, and a soul filled with ecstatic spiritual awareness.

The poems selected for *Songs of Ecstasy* are all celebratory in their message. They describe God's presence in nature, in all creatures and creation, within the human spirit and in the mysterious depths of the soul.

The musical settings, while endeavoring to capture the total expression of each poem, focus upon several key words and images. For example, in the first movement, *Song: "When Rain Sings Light,"* the word "light" recurs many times, often prefaced by the syllable "la" leading into "light" - "la la la light." These are intended to represent specks of light. They open and close the song. Another special image is that of solitude ("with pure and solitary songs"). Thus, the very powerful words, "And speak to God, my God," are sung by the Tenors, unaccompanied, marked "ecstatic."

The second song, *A Psalm: "The Spirit Sings,"* opens with a splendid phrase, "When psalms surprise me with their music, and antiphons turn to rum, the Spirit sings." A mixed-meter rhythmic background creates a Caribbean atmosphere often associated with "rum." Later in the song, a steadily-swaying

7/8 meter is introduced with the African imagery of zebras and antelopes.

"*Stranger: Thou Inward Stranger Whom I Have Never Seen*" has many phrases of special interest. "One bird sits still watching the work of God" is the culmination of the previous three stanzas of poetry. And thus, the musical expression is a point of arrival in the ascent of the phrases. The music then recedes into peaceful expression until the introduction of flowing patterns which provide a background for "one cloud upon the hillside..."

The most significant contrast in this song is the change of modality, from C Mixolydian (with B-flat) to C Lydian (with F-sharp). This change occurs with the very central stanza, "Closer and clearer than any wordy master, Thou inward Stranger whom I have never seen." These words describe the Spirit of God within, perhaps mysterious and almost unknown to each of us. The use of the Lydian mode creates the "closeness" and friction of the F-sharp against the G, presented first in the low range, and then ascending at the end. This "stranger" within creates a powerful and urgent closeness, a voice seeking to emerge. And although the music returns to the Mixolydian mode for most of the remainder of the song, the final chord (to end "Our cleanest Light is One!") expands upward to the F-sharp/G dissonance - essential and ecstatic.

—Gwyneth Walker

Total duration: 16' 00"

Song (When rain)

When rain, (sings light) rain has devoured my house
And wind wades through my trees,
The cedars fawn upon the storm with their huge paws.
Silence is louder than a cyclone
In the rude door, my shelter.
And there I eat my air alone
With pure and solitary songs

While others sit in conference.
Their windows grieve, and soon frown
And glass begins to wrinkle with a multitude of water
Till I no longer see their speech
And they no longer know my theater.

Rivers clothe their houses
And hide their naked wisdom.
Their conversations
go down into the deep like submarines:
Submerge them, with their pale expressions, in my storm.

But I drink rain, drink wind
Distinguish poems,
Boiling up out of the cold forest:
Lift to the wind my eyes full of water,
My face and mind, to take their free refreshment.

Thus I live on my own land, on my own island
And speak to God, my God, under the doorway
When rain, (sings light) rain has devoured my house
And winds wade through my trees.

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Songs of Ecstasy

for SATB Chorus (divisi) unaccompanied

Thomas Merton (1915–1968)

Gwyneth Walker

1. Song: “When Rain Sings Light”

*“Thus I live on my own land, on my own island
And speak to God...”*

With gentle motion ♩ = 108

p as specks of light

Soprano
la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la

p as specks of light

Alto
la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la

p as specks of light

Tenor
la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la

p as specks of light

Bass
la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la

With gentle motion ♩ = 108

Keyboard
(for rehearsal only)

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5

S *pp* *p*
la la la la la la la la la (sings la la la la light) —

A *pp* *p*
la la la la la la la la la (sings la la la la light) —

T *pp*
la la la la la la la la la

B *mf*
When rain, _____ rain has de-voured my

A

9

S *mf*
my house And wind wades through my trees, The ce-dars fawn up-on the

A *mf*
my house And wind wades through my trees, The ce-dars fawn up-on the

T *mf*
And wind wades through my trees, The ce-dars fawn up-on the

B
house _____ through my trees,

14

S storm with their huge paws. **f** **B** lence is loud-er than a *rit.*

A storm with their huge paws. **f** lence is loud-er than a

T storm with their huge paws.

B paws.

rit.

18 *(rit.)* **Slower** **,mf** **p**

S cy - clone In the rude door, my shel-ter. **6/4** **4/4**

A cy - clone In the rude door, my shel-ter. **6/4** **4/4**

T **f** **,mf** **p** loud-er than a cy-clone In the rude door, my shel-ter. **6/4** **4/4**

B **f** **,mf** **p** **(p)** loud-er than a cy-clone In the rude door, my shel-ter. And there I eat my **6/4** **4/4**

Slower

(rit.)

22 *(p)* *a tempo* (♩ = 108)

S air a - lone

A *(p)* air a - lone

T *(p)* air a - lone *(p)* la la la la la la la

B air a - lone With pure and sol - i - tar - y songs

a tempo (♩ = 108)

27 *(p)* *mf* **C**

S la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la While oth - ers sit in

A *(p)* la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la While oth - ers sit in

T la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la While oth - ers sit in

B la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la While oth - ers sit in

mf **C**

31

S
con - fer'nce. Their win - dows grieve, and soon frown And glass be - gins to

A
con - fer'nce. Their win - dows grieve, and soon frown And glass be - gins to

T
con - fer'nce. Their win - dows grieve, and soon frown

B
con - fer'nce. Their win - dows grieve, and soon frown

36

S
wrin - kle wa - - ter Till I no

A
wrin - kle wa - - ter Till I no

T
with a mul - ti - tude of wa - - ter

B
with a mul - ti - tude of wa - - ter

40 **D** *poco rit.*

S long - er see their speech

A long - er see their speech

T And they no long - er know my the - a - ter.

B And they no long - er know my the - a - ter.

D *poco rit.*

44 **E** Slightly slower *poco accel.*

p

S Riv - ers clothe their hous - es And hide their na - ked wis - dom. — Their con-ver-

A Riv - ers clothe their hous - es And hide their na - ked wis - dom. — Their con-ver-

T Riv - ers clothe their hous - es And hide their na - ked wis - dom. — Their con-ver-

B Riv - ers clothe their hous - es their na - ked wis - dom. — Their con-ver-

E Slightly slower *poco accel.*

48 **F** *a tempo* (♩ = 108)
mf

S sa - tions go down in - to the deep like sub - mar - ines: Sub - merge them, with their

A sa - tions go down in - to the deep like sub - mar - ines: Sub - merge them, with their

T sa - tions go down in - to the deep _____ ah _____ ah _____

B sa - tions go down in - to the deep _____ ah _____ ah _____

F *a tempo* (♩ = 108)

52 *rit.* *a tempo* **G** *with conviction and celebration*
 (♩ = 108)

S pale ex - pres - sions, in my storm. _____ *f* * ah - ah - I *p* *f* *p* *f*

A pale ex - pres - sions, in my storm. _____ *f* * ah - ah - I *p* *f* *p* *f*

T pale ex - pres - sions, in my storm. _____ *f* But I drink rain, drink

B pale ex - pres - sions, in my storm. _____ *f* But I drink rain, drink

a tempo **G** *with conviction and celebration*
 (♩ = 108)

rit.

* This "word" is an elongation of the personal pronoun *I*. It is pronounced "ah-ah-aye."

56 *p* *f* *p* *f*

S ah - ah - I ah - ah - I Boil-ing up out of the cold

A ah - ah - I ah - ah - I Boil-ing up out of the cold

T wind _____ Dis-tin-guish po - ems _____ Boil-ing up out of the cold

B wind _____ Dis-tin-guish po - ems _____ Boil-ing up out of the cold

59 *rit.*

S for - est: Lift to the wind my eyes full of wa-ter, — My face and mind, to take their

A for - est: Lift to the wind my eyes full of wa-ter, — My face and mind, to take their

T for - est: Lift to the wind my eyes full of wa-ter, — My face and mind, to take their

B for - est: Lift to the wind my eyes full of wa-ter, — My face and mind, to take their

63 (rit.) **H** Grandly ♩ = 80

S free re - fresh - ment. Thus I live on my own land, on my own is - land

A free re - fresh - ment. Thus I live on my own land, on my own is - land

T free re - fresh - ment. Thus I live on my own land, on my own is - land

B free re - fresh - ment. Thus I live on my own land, on my own is - land

mf 3

H Grandly ♩ = 80

(rit.)

67 **I** *p* *accel. poco a poco*

S And speak to God, And speak to

A *Solo p ecstatic* **Head voice, no vibrato* *mp*

T And speak to God, my God,

B *Section unis. p* *unis. p*

And speak to God, And speak to

And speak to God, And speak to

accel. poco a poco

*The notes with small circles above are to be sung in *falsetto* or head voice without *vibrato*.

(*accel.*) *mp* *p* *f* **J** *a tempo* (♩ = 108)

S
A
God, un - der the door - way When rain,

(*Solo*) *mf* *f* (*f*) *rejoin section*

T
my God, (sings

mp *p* *f* (*f*)

B
God, un - der the door - way (sings

(*accel.*) **J** *a tempo* (♩ = 108)

75

S
A
rain has de - voured my house

All *p* *f* *mf*

T
la la la la light) my house And

p *f* *mf*

B
la la la la light) my house And

rit.

a tempo (♩ = 108)

79

S

Solo p

ah _____

Section unis. *p*

mm _____

mf la la la la _____ *p*

(All) la la la la

mf

A

p

mm _____

T

8 winds wade through my trees. _____ *p*

winds wade through my trees. _____

B

p mm _____ *p*

K *a tempo* (♩ = 108)

rit.

83 *rit. to end* *p* *poco*, *poco*, *pp*

S *p* la la la la la la la la la light.

A *mf* *p* *poco*, *poco*, *pp*
la la la la la la la la la la light.

T *mf* *p* *poco*, *poco*, *pp*
la la la la la la la la la la light.

B *p* *poco*, *poco*, *pp*
la la la la la la la light.

rit. to end

Gwyneth Walker (b. 1947)

For biographical information about the composer, please visit her Web site.
<<http://www.gwynethwalker.com>>

ECSPUBLISHING



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7/8 meter is introduced with the African imagery of zebras and antelopes.

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—Gwyneth Walker

Total duration: 16' 00"

A Psalm

When psalms surprise me with their music
And antiphons turn to rum
The Spirit sings: the bottom drops out of my soul!

And from the center of my cellar,
Love, louder than thunder
Opens a heaven of naked air.

New eyes awaken.
I send Love's name into the world with wings
And songs grow up around me like a jungle.
Choirs of all creatures sing the tunes
Your Spirit played in Eden.

Zebras and antelopes and birds of paradise
Shine on the face of the abyss
And I am drunk with the great wilderness
Of the sixth day in Genesis.

But sound is never half so fair
As when that music turns to air
And the universe dies of excellence.

Sun, moon and stars
Fall from their heavenly towers.
Joys walk no longer down the blue world's shore.

Though fires loiter, lights still fly on the air of the gulf,
All fear another wind, another thunder:
Then one more voice
Snuffs all their flares in one gust.

And I go forth with no more wine and no more stars
And no more buds and no more Eden
And no more animals and no more sea:
While God sings by Himself in acres of night
And walls fall down, that guarded Paradise.

"A Psalm" By Thomas Merton, from
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for SATB Chorus (divisi) unaccompanied

Thomas Merton (1915–1968)

Gwyneth Walker

2. A Psalm: “The Spirit Sings”

“...the bottom drops out of my soul
and from the center of my cellar, Love, louder than thunder
Opens a heaven of naked air.”

With rhythmic energy ♩ = 88 (♩ = 132) but not rushed

everyone tap leg gently in rhythm
(for a Caribbean atmosphere associated with the word “rum”)
sim.

Claps/
Snaps

7 *Solo mf smoothly* **A**

S When psalms _____ sur - prise me _____ with their mu - sic _____

(for rehearsal only)

14 *rit.*

S _____ And an - ti - phons _____ turn to rum _____

rit.

*R = Right hand on right leg, L = Left hand on left leg.

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4

19 *rit.* **Slowly** B **Moderate tempo** ♩ = 100

S *All* *p*
 Section *mf* *mm _____ The Spir - it sings: the bot - tom drops out of my

A *mf* *p*
 *mm _____ The Spir - it sings: the bot - tom drops out of my

T *mf*
 *mm _____ The Spir - it sings:

B *mf*
 *mm _____ The Spir - it sings:

(leg taps) (stop tapping)

23 *f*

S *f*
 soul! _____ Love, loud - er than

A *f*
 soul! _____ Love, loud - er than

T *f*
 And from the cen - ter of my cel - lar, _____ Love, loud - er than

B *f*
 And from the cen - ter of my cel - lar, _____ Love, loud - er than

*Savoring the word "rum."

26

S thun - der O - pens a heav - en of na - ked air. *rit.* *p* *f*

A thun - der O - pens a heav - en of na - ked air. *p* *f*

T thun - der O - pens a heav - en of na - ked air. *p* *f*

B thun - der O - pens a heav - en of na - ked air. *p* *f*

29 **C** Tempo I ♩ = 88 (♩ = 132) *Solo mf*

T

B *Solo mf*

New eyes — a - wak - en. —

(tap leg, as before)

C Tempo I ♩ = 88 (♩ = 132)

37 *Solo mf* **D**

A And songs grow up a-round me —

T send Love's name in - to the world with wings

(leg taps)

D

43 *rit. unis. mf* **Slowly** ♩ = 80, *p cresc. poco a poco*

S jun - - gle. Choirs of all crea- tures sing the

(Solo) *p cresc. poco a poco* **rejoin section**

A — like a jun - gle. *Section mf*, *All p cresc. poco a poco*

T jun - - gle. Choirs of all crea- tures sing the *All mf unis.*, *p cresc. poco a poco*

B jun - - gle. Choirs of all crea- tures sing the *All mf unis.*, *p cresc. poco a poco*

(stop tapping)

Slowly ♩ = 80

rit.

48

S *f p* *rit.*
 tunes Your Spir - it played in E - den. mm

A *f p*
 tunes Your Spir - it played in E - den. mm

T *f*
 tunes Your Spir - it played in E - den.

B *f*
 tunes Your Spir - it played in E - den.

While snapping fingers (see below), everyone should gently swing their arms forward and back, one arm at a time (one per measure), perhaps as an animal striding through the jungle.

E Tempo I ♩ = 88 (♩ = 132)

51 (An African rhythm)

T *p* *mf*
 hmm Ze - bras and

B *p* *mf*
 hmm Ze - bras and

everyone snap fingers gently in rhythm

E Tempo I ♩ = 88 (♩ = 132)

56 F *f* enthusiastically

S *f* and birds of

A *mf* Ze - bras and an - te-lobes, ze - bras and an - te-lobes, **

T an - te-lobes, ze - bras and an - te-lobes, ze - bras and *p*

B an - te-lobes, ze - bras and an - te-lobes, ze - bras and *p*

(finger snaps)

60

S par - a - dise la la la la la la la Shine on the

A *p* ze - bras and an - te-lobes, ze - bras and an - te-lobes,

T an - te-lobes, ze - bras and an - te-lobes, ze - bras and

B an - te-lobes, ze - bras and an - te-lobes, ze - bras and

* Bass may alternate every 2 measures to spell each other.

**Altos may alternate every 2 measures to spell each other.

64

S face of the a - byss _____ And I am drunk with the

A ze - bras and an - te-lobes, ze - bras and an - te-lobes,

T an - te-lobes, ze - bras and an - te-lobes, ze - bras and

B an - te-lobes, ze - bras and an - te-lobes, ze - bras and
(finger snaps)

Detailed description: This block contains the musical score for measures 64 through 67. It features four vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass), a percussion line for finger snaps, and a piano accompaniment. The Soprano part begins with a melodic line and a long note on 'byss'. The other vocal parts enter with a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines in both hands.

68

S great _____ wil - der - ness _____ Of the sixth day in

A ze - bras and an - te-lobes, ze - bras and an - te-lobes,

T an - te - lobes, ze - bras and an - te-lobes, la la la

B an - te-lobes, ze - bras and an - te-lobes, la la la

Detailed description: This block contains the musical score for measures 68 through 71. It features four vocal staves, a percussion line for finger snaps, and a piano accompaniment. The Soprano part has a melodic line with a long note on 'ness'. The other vocal parts continue with the rhythmic pattern. The piano accompaniment maintains the harmonic structure with chords and moving lines.

72

rit. **G** (*stop arm swinging*)

p

S Gen - e - sis, Gen - e - sis. But

A Gen - e - sis. Gen - e - sis. But

T ⁸ la la la *unis. f* Gen - e - sis. But

B la la la *f* Gen - e - sis. But

(finger snaps) (stop finger snaps)

G

rit.

76

(p) *cresc. poco a poco*

S sound is nev - er half so fair as when that mu - sic turns to air And the

A *(p)* *cresc. poco a poco*

T ⁸ *(p)* *cresc. poco a poco*

B *(p)* *cresc. poco a poco*

sound is nev - er half so fair as when that mu - sic turns to air And the

(p) *cresc. poco a poco*

With motion ♩ = 112

80 *f* *rit.* **H** *a tempo* (♩ = 112)

S u - ni - verse dies of ex - cel - lence. Sun, moon and

A u - ni - verse dies of ex - cel - lence. Sun, moon and

T u - ni - verse dies of ex - cel - lence. ah

B u - ni - verse dies of ex - cel - lence. ah

84 *p sub.*

S stars Fall from their heav'n - ly Joys walk no lon - ger down the

A stars Fall from their heav'n - ly tow'rs. Joys walk no lon - ger down the

T stars Fall, tow'rs. Joys walk no lon - ger down the

B stars Fall, tow'rs. Joys walk no lon - ger down the

I (Same tempo)

88

S blue world's shore. Though fires loi - ter, — lights still fly on the

A blue world's shore. Though fires loi - ter, — lights still fly on the

T blue world's shore. Though fires loi - ter, — lights still fly on the

B blue world's shore. Though fires loi - ter, — lights still fly on the

I (Same tempo)

91

S air of the gulf, All fear an - oth - er wind, an - oth - er thun - der: *mf* *f* *mf* *rit.* *f*

A air of the gulf, All fear an - oth - er wind, an - oth - er thun - der: *mf* *f* *mf* *f*

T air of the gulf, All fear an - oth - er wind, an - oth - er thun - der: *mf* *f* *mf* *f*

B air of the gulf, All fear an - oth - er wind, an - oth - er thun - der: *mf* *f* *mf* *f*

a tempo (♩ = 112)

93 *mf* *f* *mf* *rit.* *f*

S Then one more voice Snuffs all their flares in one gust. —

A Then one more voice Snuffs all their flares in one gust. —

T Then one more voice Snuffs all their flares in one gust. —

B Then one more voice Snuffs all their flares in one gust. —

a tempo (♩ = 112)

rit.

94 **J** Tempo I ♩ = 88 (♩ = 132) *Solo mf*

S And I go forth with

T *p in the background* la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la

B *p in the background* la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la

tap leg, as before

J Tempo I ♩ = 88 (♩ = 132)

*Grace notes precede the beat.

100 *All*

S no more wine and no more stars And no more buds and

A *Solo mf* and no more stars And no more buds and *All*

T la la la la la la la la la la la la and *mf*

B la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la

(leg tapping)

106 **K** *rit.*

S no more E-den And no more an-i-mals and no more sea: While

A no more E-den And no more an-i-mals and no more sea: While

T no no no more E-den And no no no more an-i-mals and no no no more sea: While

B la la la la la la la la la and no more sea: While *mf*

(stop tapping)

K *rit.*

112 **L** *Slower* ♩ = 100 *f grandly*

S God sings by Him - self in a - cres of night And

A *f grandly* God sings by Him - self in a - cres of night And

T *f grandly* God sings by Him - self in a - cres of night And

B *f grandly* God sings by Him - self in a - cres of night And

114 *rit.*

S walls fall down, that guard-ed Par - a - dise, Par - a - dise,

A walls fall down, that guard-ed Par - a - dise, Par - a - dise,

T walls fall down, that guard-ed Par - a - dise, — Par - a - dise,

B walls fall down, that guard-ed Par - a - dise, — Par - a - dise,

M Tempo I

117

p mm

p mm

tap leg, as before

M Tempo I

123

rit. to end

p *f*

p *f*

p *f*

p *f*

ah Par - a - dise.

ah Par - a - dise.

ah Par - a - dise.

ah Par - a - dise.

(stop tapping)

rit. to end

a final finger snap at face level (both hands)

finger snap

4'00"

GWYNETH WALKER

Songs of Ecstasy

- | | | |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Song: "When Rain Sings Light" | (SATB divisi) | No. 7933 |
| 2. A Psalm: "The Spirit Sings" | (SATB divisi) | No. 7934 |
| → 3. Stranger: "Thou Inward Stranger
Whom I Have Never Seen" | (SATB divisi) | No. 7935 |
| Songs of Ecstasy | (Tenor & Organ) | No. 7936 |

Program Notes

Songs of Ecstasy are musical settings of three poems by Thomas Merton (1915–1968), a Trappist monk who lived for many years in solitude at the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky. Merton's writings express an imagination sparked by divine revelation, and a soul filled with ecstatic spiritual awareness.

The poems selected for *Songs of Ecstasy* are all celebratory in their message. They describe God's presence in nature, in all creatures and creation, within the human spirit and in the mysterious depths of the soul.

The musical settings, while endeavoring to capture the total expression of each poem, focus upon several key words and images. For example, in the first movement, *Song: "When Rain Sings Light,"* the word "light" recurs many times, often prefaced by the syllable "la" leading into "light" - "la la la light." These are intended to represent specks of light. They open and close the song. Another special image is that of solitude ("with pure and solitary songs"). Thus, the very powerful words, "And speak to God, my God," are sung by the Tenors, unaccompanied, marked "ecstatic."

The second song, *A Psalm: "The Spirit Sings,"* opens with a splendid phrase, "When psalms surprise me with their music, and antiphons turn to rum, the Spirit sings." A mixed-meter rhythmic background creates a Caribbean atmosphere often associated with "rum." Later in the song, a steadily-swaying

7/8 meter is introduced with the African imagery of zebras and antelopes.

"*Stranger: Thou Inward Stranger Whom I Have Never Seen*" has many phrases of special interest. "One bird sits still watching the work of God" is the culmination of the previous three stanzas of poetry. And thus, the musical expression is a point of arrival in the ascent of the phrases. The music then recedes into peaceful expression until the introduction of flowing patterns which provide a background for "one cloud upon the hillside..."

The most significant contrast in this song is the change of modality, from C Mixolydian (with B-flat) to C Lydian (with F-sharp). This change occurs with the very central stanza, "Closer and clearer than any wordy master, Thou inward Stranger whom I have never seen." These words describe the Spirit of God within, perhaps mysterious and almost unknown to each of us. The use of the Lydian mode creates the "closeness" and friction of the F-sharp against the G, presented first in the low range, and then ascending at the end. This "stranger" within creates a powerful and urgent closeness, a voice seeking to emerge. And although the music returns to the Mixolydian mode for most of the remainder of the song, the final chord (to end "Our cleanest Light is One!") expands upward to the F-sharp/G dissonance - essential and ecstatic.

—Gwyneth Walker

Total duration: 16' 00"

Stranger

When no one listens
To the quiet trees
When no one notices
The sun in the pool

Where no one feels
The first drop of rain
Or sees the last star

Or hails the first morning
Of a giant world
Where peace begins
And rages end:

One bird sits still
Watching the work of God:
One turning leaf,
Two falling blossoms,
Ten circles upon the pond.

One cloud upon the hillside,
Two shadows in the valley
And the light strikes home.

Now dawn commands the capture
Of the tallest fortune,
The surrender
Of no less marvelous prize!

Closer and clearer
Than any wordy master,
Thou inward Stranger,
Whom I have never seen,

Deeper and cleaner
Than the clamorous ocean,
Seize up my silence
Hold me in Thy Hand!

Now act is waste
And suffering undone
Laws become prodigals
Limits are torn down
For envy has no property
And passion is none.

Look, the vast Light stands still
Our cleanest Light is One!

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Songs of Ecstasy

for SATB Chorus (divisi) unaccompanied

Thomas Merton (1915–1968)

Gwyneth Walker

3. Stranger: “Thou Inward Stranger Whom I Have Never Seen”

*Thou inward Stranger
Whom I have never seen...
Seize up my silence
Hold me in Thy Hand!*

Optional transition
from previous song

Slowly, freely *p* *mm*

Moderately slowly ♩ = 88 *p*

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Keyboard
(for rehearsal only)

Slowly, freely *p* *mm*

Moderately slowly ♩ = 88 *p*

When no one lis-tens To the qui-et trees

When no one lis-tens To the qui-et trees

When no one lis-tens To the qui-et When

When no one lis-tens To the qui-et trees

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accel. poco a poco
cresc. poco a poco (to A)

3

S When no one no-tic-es The sun in the pool Where no one feels The first

A When no one no-tic-es The sun in the pool Where no one feels The first

T — no one no-tic-es The sun in the Where — no one feels The first

B When no one no-tic-es The sun in the pool Where no one feels The first

accel. poco a poco

6

S drop of rain Or sees the last star Or hails the first morn-ing Of a

A drop of rain Or sees the last star Or hails the first morn-ing Of a

T drop of rain Or sees the last star Or hails the first morn-ing Of a

B drop of rain Or sees the last star Or hails the first morn-ing Of a

(accel.)
(cresc.)

(accel.)

9 *(accel.)* **Faster** *(cresc.)* *rit.*

S gi - ant world_ Where peace be - gins And ra - - - ges_

A gi - ant world_ Where peace be - gins And ra - - - ges_

T gi - ant world_ Where peace be - gins And ra - - - ges_

B gi - ant world_ Where peace be - gins And ra - - - ges_

(accel.) **Faster** *rit.*

A *a tempo* ♩ = 88

12 *rit.*

S end: *f* One bird sits still *mf* Watch - ing the work of

A end: *f* One bird sits still *mf* Watch - ing the work of

T end: *f* One bird sits still *mf* Watch - ing the work of

B end: *f* One bird sits still *mf* Watch - ing the work of

rit. **A** *a tempo* ♩ = 88

6

16

p *(p)*

S God: Ten cir - cles up - on the

A God: Two fall - ing blos - soms, Ten cir - cles up - on the

T God: One turn - ing leaf, Two fall - ing blos - soms, Ten cir - cles up - on the

B God: One turn - ing leaf, Two fall - ing blos - soms, Ten cir - cles up - on the

20 *rit.* **B With motion** ♩ = 112

S pond.

A pond. *p* flowing, as a cloud passing by

T pond. *p* flowing, as a cloud passing by *ah (da da)

B pond. *ah (da da)

B With motion ♩ = 112

rit.

*The syllable "da" (with a very soft "D" sound) may be used, if necessary, to help articulate the triplets through m. 27.

23 *mf unis.*

S One cloud up - on the hill - side, Two shad - ows in the

A Two shad - ows in the

T ah

B ah ah

Slightly slower
♩ = 100
, *p*

26 *poco rit.*

S val - ley And the light strikes home. Now

A val - ley And the light strikes home. Now

T ah home.

B ah home.

Slightly slower
♩ = 100
, *p*

*Grace notes precede the beat.

8
29 **C**

S dawn com-mands the cap-ture Of the tall-est for-tune, — The sur -

A dawn com-mands the cap-ture Of the tall-est for-tune, — The sur -

T *p* the tall-est for-tune, — The sur -
p the tall-est for-tune, —

B The sur -

C

30

S ren-der Of no less mar-vel-ous prize! ah

A ren-der Of no less mar-vel-ous prize! ah

T ren-der Of no less mar-vel-ous prize!

B ren-der Of no less mar-vel-ous prize!

rit. **D** Tempo I ♩ = 88

32 *unis.* *p* *(p)*

S ah, ah,

A ah, ah,

T *p* Ah, Clo-ser and clear-er Than an-y word-y mast-er, Thou in-ward Stran-ger Whom *cresc. poco a poco* (to m. 42)

B *p* Ah, Clo-ser and clear-er Than an-y word-y mast-er, Thou in-ward Stran-ger Whom *cresc. poco a poco* (to m. 42)

D Tempo I ♩ = 88

rit.

36 *cresc.* (to m. 42)

S ah, Thou in-ward *cresc.* (to m. 42)

A ah, Thou in-ward

T *(cresc.)* I have nev - er seen, Deep - er and clean-er Than the clam-or - ous o - cean,

B *(cresc.)* I have nev - er seen, Deep-er and clean-er Than the clam-or - ous o - cean,

39 *(cresc.)* *rit.*

S Stran - ger, Thou in - ward Stran - ger, Thou in - ward Stran - ger, in - ward Stran - ger, Hold —

A Stran - ger, Thou in - ward Stran - ger, Thou in - ward Stran - ger, in - ward Stran - ger, Hold —

T 8 *(cresc.)* Seize up my si - lence. Hold me in Thy Hand! Hold me in Thy Hand!

B *(cresc.)* Seize up my si - lence. Hold me in Thy Hand! Hold me in Thy Hand!

rit.

42 *(rit.)* **E** *a tempo* ♩ = 88

S — me in Thy Hand! Now act is waste And suf - fer - ing un -

A — me in Thy Hand! Now act is waste And suf - fer - ing un -

T 8 *f* Hold me in Thy Hand! Now act is waste ——— And suf - fer - ing un -

B *f* Hold me in Thy Hand! Now act is waste ——— And suf - fer - ing un -

E *a tempo* ♩ = 88

(rit.)

46 *mf* *p*

S done Laws be-come prod-i - gals_ Lim-its are torn down

A done Laws be-come prod-i - gals_ Lim-its are torn down

T done Laws be-come prod-i - gals_ Lim-its are torn down For

B done prod-i-gals torn down For

49 *p* *poco rit.*

S And pas-sion is none, none.

A And pas-sion is none, none.

T en - vy has no prop-er - ty none.

B en - vy has no prop-er - ty none.

12 **F** ♩ = 80

52 *f* [^] *ecstatic*

S Look, the vast Light stands still _____ Our

A Look, the vast Light stands still _____ Our

T Ah, _____ still _____ Our

B Ah, _____ still _____ Our

F ♩ = 80

53 *rit.*

S clean - est _____ Light One! _____

A clean - est _____ Light One! _____

T clean - est _____ Light One! _____

B clean - est _____ Light is One! _____

rit.

Gwyneth Walker (b. 1947)
 For biographical information about the composer, please visit her Web site.
 <<http://www.gwynethwalker.com>>

3'15"
 May 21, 2011 / Braintree, Vermont

ECSPUBLISHING



GWYNETH WALKER

Songs of Ecstasy

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—Gwyneth Walker

Total duration: 16' 00"

Stranger

When no one listens
To the quiet trees
When no one notices
The sun in the pool

Where no one feels
The first drop of rain
Or sees the last star

Or hails the first morning
Of a giant world
Where peace begins
And rages end:

One bird sits still
Watching the work of God:
One turning leaf,
Two falling blossoms,
Ten circles upon the pond.

One cloud upon the hillside,
Two shadows in the valley
And the light strikes home.

Now dawn commands the capture
Of the tallest fortune,
The surrender
Of no less marvelous prize!

Closer and clearer
Than any wordy master,
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Deeper and cleaner
Than the clamorous ocean,
Seize up my silence
Hold me in Thy Hand!

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And suffering undone
Laws become prodigals
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A Psalm

When psalms surprise me with their music
And antiphons turn to rum
The Spirit sings: the bottom drops out of my soul!

And from the center of my cellar,
Love, louder than thunder
Opens a heaven of naked air.

New eyes awaken.
I send Love's name into the world with wings
And songs grow up around me like a jungle.
Choirs of all creatures sing the tunes
Your Spirit played in Eden.

Zebras and antelopes and birds of paradise
Shine on the face of the abyss
And I am drunk with the great wilderness
Of the sixth day in Genesis.

But sound is never half so fair
As when that music turns to air
And the universe dies of excellence.

Sun, moon and stars
Fall from their heavenly towers.
Joys walk no longer down the blue world's shore.

Though fires loiter, lights still fly on the air of the gulf,
All fear another wind, another thunder:
Then one more voice
Snuffs all their flares in one gust.

And I go forth with no more wine and no more stars
And no more buds and no more Eden
And no more animals and no more sea:
While God sings by Himself in acres of night
And walls fall down, that guarded Paradise.

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Songs of Ecstasy

for Tenor and Organ

Thomas Merton (1915–1968)

Gwyneth Walker

1. Song: "When Rain Sings Light"

"Thus I live on my own land, on my own island
And speak to God..."

With gentle motion ♩ = 108

Tenor

When rain, (sings

Organ

*I Solo, as a speck of light

*II *p* as an accompaniment

Pedal

p as an accompaniment

6

la-la-la-la-light) rain has de-voured my house And wind wades through my

The musical score is written for Tenor, Organ, and Pedal. It begins with a tempo marking of 'With gentle motion ♩ = 108'. The Tenor part starts with a rest followed by the lyrics 'When rain, (sings'. The Organ part features two staves: the upper staff is marked '*I Solo, as a speck of light' and the lower staff is marked '*II p as an accompaniment'. The Pedal part is marked '*II p as an accompaniment'. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf*, *p*, and *mp*, and includes a section starting at measure 6 with the lyrics 'la-la-la-la-light) rain has de-voured my house And wind wades through my'. The organ part in this section has markings for 'I' and 'II'.

*I - Solo (2')
II - as an accompaniment

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11

f

trees, The ce - dars fawn up-on the storm with their huge paws. Si -

16 **B** *rit.* **Slower**, *mf*

- lence is loud-er than a cy - clone In the rude door, my shel - ter.

B **Slower**

f *rit.* *mp* *p*

f

20 *p*

And there I eat my air a - lone. With pure and sol - i - tar - y

25 *a tempo* (♩ = 108) *mf*

songs. While

a tempo (♩ = 108)

29 **C**

8 oth - ers sit in con - frence. Their win - dows grieve, and soon

mf

33

8 frown And glass be - gins to wrin - kle with a mul - ti - tude of

mf

37

8 wa - - ter Till I no long - er see their speech And they no

mf

41 *poco rit.* , **E** Slightly slower *p*

long - er know my the - a - ter. Riv - ers clothe their hous - es And

poco rit. , **E** Slightly slower *p*

45 *poco accel.* **F** *a tempo* (♩ = 108) *mf*

hide their na - ked wis - dom. Their con - ver - sa - tions go down in - to the deep like

F *a tempo* (♩ = 108) *mf*

poco accel. *mf*

49 *rit.* , *a tempo* (♩ = 108) , *f*

sub - mar - ines: sub - merge them, with their pale ex - press - ions in my storm. But

a tempo (♩ = 108) , *f*

rit. *f*

53 **G**

I drink rain, drink wind _____ Dis-tin-guish po-ems.

p cresc. poco a poco (to H)

57

Boil - ing up out of the cold for - est:

(cresc.)

59

Lift to the wind my eyes full of wa - ter, _____

(cresc.)

61

rit.

My face and mind to take their free re - fresh - ment:

(cresc.) rit.

63

H Grandly ♩ = 80

mf

p ecstatic

Thus I live on my own land, on my own is - land And speak to

f *mf*

H Grandly ♩ = 80

67

I

mp

mf

God, my God, my God

pp *mp* *mf* *mf*

72 *f*, *mf* **J** *a tempo* (♩ = 108), *f*, *p*, *f*

un-der the door-way. When rain, (sings la-la-la-la-light) rain has de-voured my

J *a tempo* (♩ = 108)

I II

p *mf*

77 *mf*, *rit.*, *p*

house _____ And winds wade through my trees. _____

I II

mf *rit.* *p*

82 **K** *a tempo* *rit. to end*, *p*

la-la-la-la-la-light. _

K *a tempo* *p* *rit. to end*

2. A Psalm: “The Spirit Sings”

“...the bottom drops out of my soul
and from the center of my cellar, Love, louder than thunder
Opens a heaven of naked air.”

Thomas Merton (1915–1968)

Gwyneth Walker

With rhythmic energy ♩ = 88 (♩ = 132) but not rushed
(suggestive of a Caribbean atmosphere associated with the word “rum”)

7 A *mf* smoothly

When psalms _____ sur - prise me _____ with their

13 *rit.*

mu - sic _____ And an - ti - phons _____ turn to rum _____

rit.

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19 (rit.) **Slowly** **B** **Moderate tempo** ♩ = 100 *p*

(mm) The Spir-it sings: the bot-tom drops out of my

(rit.) **Slowly** **B** **Moderate tempo** ♩ = 100 *p*

mf (to answer Tenor)

23 *f*

soul! And from the cen-ter of my cel-lar, — Love, loud-er than thun - der

27 *rit.* *p* *f* **C** **Tempo I** ♩ = 88 (♩ = 132)

O-pens a heav-en of na - ked air.

rit. *p* *pp* (more rhythm than pitch, as at the beginning)

* Cue-sized notes at various moments in the score are *ossia* parts, to be performed as the singer chooses.

31 *mf*

New eyes a - wak - en. I

37

send Love's name in-to the world with wings. And

43 **D** *rit.*

songs grow up a-round me like a jun - gle.

p rit.

49 **Slowly** ♩ = 80 *p* *f*

Choirs of all crea-tures sing the tunes your spir - it played in E - den.

Slowly ♩ = 80

TENOR: gently swing arms forward and back, one arm at a time (one per measure), perhaps as an animal striding through the jungle.

52 *rit.* **E** Tempo I ♩ = 88 (♩ = 132)

E Tempo I ♩ = 88 (♩ = 132)

f rit.

pp (as before)

57 *mf* **F** *f* enthusiastically

Ze - bras and an - tel - opes, and birds of

mf colorful Solo **F**

62

par - a - dise Shines on the face of the a -

pp

67

byss. — And I am drunk with the great — wil - der - ness —

72

Of the sixth day in Gen - e - sis, Gen - e - sis.

rit.
mf

mf Solo

rit.

Stop swinging arms

77

But sound is nev - er half so fair — as when that mu - sic turns to

p

With motion ♩ = 112

cresc.

81

air And the un - i - verse dies of ex - cel - lence, ex - cel - lence.

(cresc.)

f

rit.

rit.

16

H *a tempo* (♩ = 112)

85

Sun, — moon and stars Fall from the heav'n - ly

H *a tempo* (♩ = 112)

88

, *p sub.*

I

towers. Joys walk no long-er down the blue world's shore. Though fires loi-ter, -

92

mf

f

mf

rit.

lights still fly on the air of the gulf. All fear a-noth-er wind, an-oth-er thun-der:

a tempo (♩ = 112)

95

mf

f

mf

f

Then one more voice snuffs all their flares in one gust. —

a tempo (♩ = 112)

96 **J** Tempo I ♩ = 88 (♩ = 132)*mf*

And I go forth with

J Tempo I ♩ = 88 (♩ = 132)*mf Solo*

pp (background)

102

no more wine and no more stars and no more buds and

108 **K**

no no no more E - den and no no no more an - i - mals and

K

112 *rit.* **L** Slower ♩ = 100 *f*

no no no more sea: While God sings by him-self in a-ces of night And

L Slower ♩ = 100

116 *rit.*

walls fall down that guard-ed Par - a - dise, Par - a - dise.

119 **M** Tempo I ♩ = 88 (♩ = 132)

M Tempo I ♩ = 88 (♩ = 132)

p

*Play whichever pitch the Tenor elects to sing.

125 *rit. to end*
p
ah

6
rit. to end

128 (*rit.*)
Par - a - dise! _

(rit.) cresc. 6
f 3

3. Stranger: "Thou Inward Stranger Whom I Have Never Seen"

*Thou inward Stranger
Whom I have never seen...
Seize up my silence
Hold me in Thy Hand!*

Thomas Merton (1915–1968)

Gwyneth Walker

Slowly **Moderately slow** ♩ = 88

p

When no one lis - tens To the qui - et trees

Slowly **Moderately slow** ♩ = 88

p

4 *accel. poco a poco*
cresc. poco a poco (to A)

When no one no - ti - ces The sun in the pool Where no one feels The first drop of rain Or

accel. poco a poco

8 *(accel.)* *(cresc.)* **Faster**

sees the last star Or hails the first morn - ing Of a gi - ant world Where peace be - gins and

Faster

mf

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12 (cresc.) *rit.* **A** *a tempo* (♩ = 88) *f*

ra - ges - end. One bird sits still

16 *mf* *rit.* *cresc.* *p*

Watch - ing the work of God: One turn - ing leaf, Two fall - ing - blos - soms,

20 *rit.* **B** *With motion* ♩ = 112

Ten cir - cles - up - on the pond.

B *With motion* ♩ = 112
flowing, as a cloud passing by

23

mf

One cloud — up - on the hill - side,

26

Two shad - ows — in the val - ley And the light strikes home. —

29

poco rit. C *p* Slightly slower ♩ = 100

Now dawn com - mands the cap - ture Of the tall - est for - tune, The sur -

poco rit. C *p* Slightly slower ♩ = 100

f

31

ren - der Of no less mar - vel - ous prize!

(f)

33 *rit.* *(f)*

Ah, Clo - ser and clear - er Than an - y word - y mas - ter,

D Tempo I ♩ = 88

rit. *dim.* *p*

36 *cresc. poco a poco (to m. 43)*

Thou in - ward Stran - ger Whom I have nev - er seen, Deep - er and clean - er Than the

cresc. poco a poco (to m. 43)

39 *(cresc.)* *rit.*



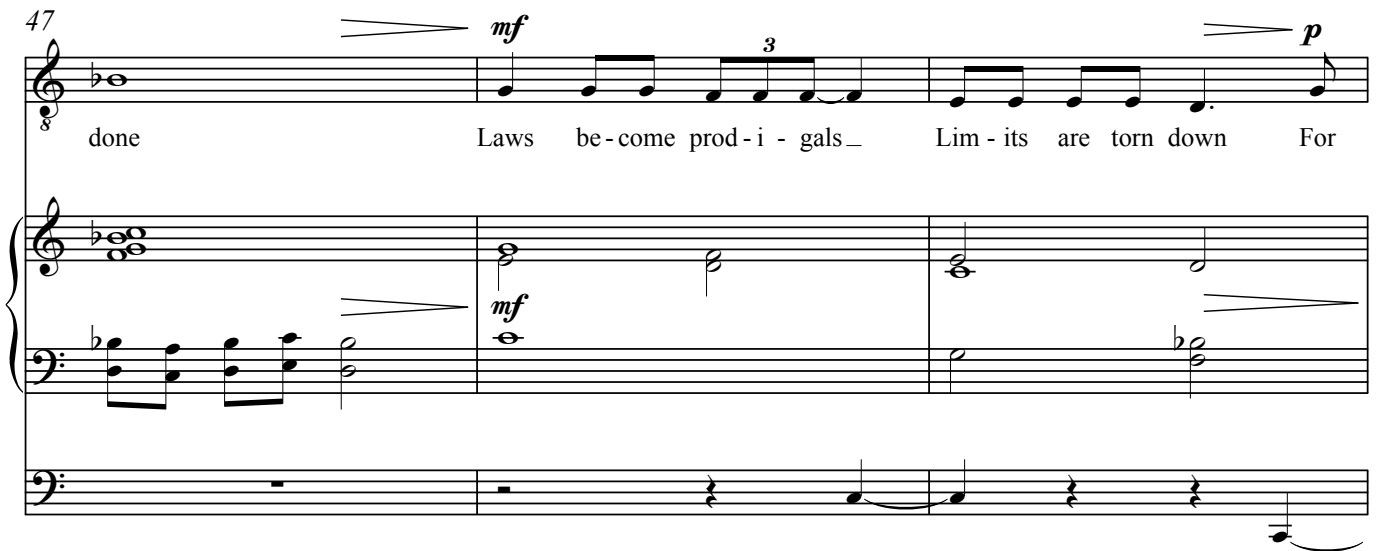
clam - or - ous o - cean, Seize up my si - lence Hold me in Thy Hand! Hold me in Thy Hand!

43 *f (rit.)* **E** *a tempo* (♩ = 88)



Hold me in Thy Hand! Now act is waste And suf - fer - ing un -

47 *mf* 3 *p*



done Laws be - come prod - i - gals_ Lim - its are torn down For

poco rit.

50

en - vy has no prop - er - ty ___ And pas - sion is none. ___

p

poco rit.

F ♩ = 80

53 *f*ecstatic

Look, the vast Light stands still ___ Our

f

F ♩ = 80

54

clean - est ___ Light is One! ___

rit.

rit.

Gwyneth Walker (b. 1947)

For biographical information about the composer, please visit her Web site.
<<http://www.gwynethwalker.com>>

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