

Gwyneth Walker

The Sun is Love

songs for High Voice and Piano

based on the poetry of Jelaluddin Rumi

*commissioned by Jamie Shaak
as a wedding gift for her husband, Mark Ragan*

*for premiere at their wedding
September 28, 2002*

Randolph, Vermont

Duration: 21 minutes

1. *"Circling the Sun"* *p. 1*

2. *"Quietness"* *7*

3. *"Flirtation: Light and Wine and Pomegranate Flowers"* *10*

4. *"The Sunrise Ruby"* *21*

5. *"Dualities"* *29*
insomnias
meetings
mirrors
stones

6. *"A Waterbird"* *37*

The poetry of Jelaluddin Rumi (1207-1273) is seamless. Some poems are lengthy, with images spinning out into many directions. Other poems are fragments, joining together to offer varying views of love. And thus, **The Sun is Love** is a flowing set of songs intended to be presented as a whole. The language of Rumi (brilliantly translated by Coleman Barks) may enfold the listener as the course of the songs progresses.

The opening song, "Circling the Sun," introduces the title phrase of "the sun is love," along with the image of the lover as a "speck circling the sun." This song is intended to draw the listener into the world of romance which is central to Rumi's writings. Sacredness and love.

"Quietness" is a brief reflection of the letting go (dying) of the self in surrender to love, and to the new self which begins "on the other side."

"Light and Wine and Pomegranate Flowers" is a set of short flirtation songs. She entices her lover to the orchard in Spring, their souls dance. She tells him of the mysteries of life, and then chastises him when he falls asleep as she sings (!).

The musical settings of these three songs endeavor to capture the simplicity and variety of the Rumi style: the joyful circling of the sun, the passionate surrender to love and the bouncy flirtatiousness. The occasional strumming of the strings inside the piano is intended as caresses. Each song has a different character.

"The Sunrise Ruby," is a passionate song. She asks "Do you love me or yourself more?" He answers "There's nothing left of me...I'm like a ruby held up to the sunlight." As he surrenders to love, the piano expresses the warmth of the ruby. The interval of the second, which opens and closes the song, symbolizes the closeness of the two lovers.

"Dualities" is a lighthearted group of song-fragments, each expressing a contradictory set of aspects of love. She has insomnia when her lover is present (staying up all night together) and when he is absent (distraction). Looking outward for love, and looking within. Love as pain, and the sweet cold water that cures the pain. Holding the lover close like a lute, or tossing stones (teasingly) at the beloved. In keeping with the dualities topic of the lyrics, each song employs opposing musical elements: high and low ranges of the piano, alternations between two chords, or gentle strumming (lute) vs. scampering intervals (tossing stones).

"A Waterbird" is a pure love song, without teasing or flirtation. The lover seeks the other ("What I want is to see your face") and seeks a union with love ("To swim like a huge fish in ocean water," and "I want to sing like birds sing..."). The final surrender comes with the phrase "I am a waterbird flying into the sun." With this, the piano accompaniment rises to the end of the keyboard, and the singer stands with arms outstretched to the sun.

notes by Gwyneth Walker

1. Circling the Sun

Soprano and Piano

Jelaluddin Rumi
(1207–1273)

Gwyneth Walker

$\text{♩} = 120$

p lightly *sim.* *p*
poco Ped., gradually add more until m. 9

cresc. *sim.*

A

8 *f* with warmth and exuberance

The sun is love.

(cresc.) *f*

12

The lov - er, a speck cir-cling the sun,

16

cir - - - - - 3 - 3 - cling the

B

19

sun. A Spring wind moves to dance an-y

23

branch that is - n't dead.

27 **C**

f

The sun is love, ————— love. —————

rit.

D Slower, quasi recitative

p *hushed, magical* 3

Some - thing o - pens our wings.

34 3 3 3 3

Some - thing makes bore - dom and hurt dis - ap - pear. Some - one fills the cup in front of us. —

E a tempo ♩ = 120

36

We taste on - ly sa - cred - ness. —————

(p) 3 3 3 *sim.*

39 *(p) smoothly*

Held like this, to draw in milk, no will, tast-ing

42 *cresc.*
clouds of milk, ne - ver so con - tent,

45 *rit. (cresc.)* *mf* **F** *Slower, quasi recitative (mf)*
ne - ver so con - tent. I stand up and this

48 *f emphatically*
one of me — turns in-to a hun-dred of me, a hun-dred of me. They say I cir-cle a-round you.

(Ped.)

a tempo ♩ = 120

51

Non-sense. I cir-cle a-round-me.

p

53

p

sim.

f

8va

56

G

The sun is love,

f

loco

(8va)

2. Quietness

p slowly, gently

In-side this new love, die.* In-side this new love, die.

(Ped.)
(Pedal still depressed from previous song)

6 *p* *mf*
accel. to m. 12

Your way be-gins on the oth-er side. Be-come the sky, be-come the sky, be -

10 (accel.) $\text{♩} = 120$ **A**
f

come the sky. Take an axe to the pri-son

* This refers to a surrender (death) of the self, of the will, to love.

13 *mf* *p*

wall. ——— Es - cape. ——— Es - cape. ——— Walk out like some - one

(8va) *loco*

17 *mf*

sud - den - ly born in - to col - or. Do it now. ——— You're co - vered with thick

mf

21 **B** *molto rit.* *f*

cloud. ——— Slide out the side. ——— Die, and be

3. Flirtation: Light and Wine and Pomegranate Flowers

Relaxed tempo (equal eighths)

8va *p* *rit.* *loco*

(Ped.)

♩ = 144 as a gentle Tango

2 *p* *lightly* *poco Ped. (ad lib.)*

5 **A** *mf* *lightly, flirtatiously*

8 *mf*
Come to the orch - ard

12

in Spring. — There is light and wine, and sweet - hearts - in the

16

pom - e - gra - nate — flowers.

19

— Come to the orch - ard in Spring,

23

in Spring, in Spring, in Spring, in Spring. If you do not come,

rit. **B** freely

27 *f* (spoken teasingly, lightheartedly)

these do not mat-ter. If you do come, these do not matter.

gva

30 **C** a tempo

p playfully

34 *p*

Come

mf

38 *mf*

to the orch - ard in Spring, in Spring,

42 *f*

in Spring, in Spring, in Spring, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la,

46 rit. & dim. *p* **D** ♩ = 108

la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la.

pp very delicately

(*red.*) with soft Ped. Ped. sim.

51 *p*

Day - light, full of

(*8va*)

54 *loco*

small danc - ing par - ti - cles and the

(*8va*)

56

one great turn - - - - ing,

release soft Ped.

E *cresc. & accel.*

59

our souls are danc - ing with you, with-out

p

62

(cresc. & accel.) *f*

feet, they dance, they dance, they dance, they dance, they dance. Can you

rit.

65

see them when I whis-per in your ear, I whis-per in your ear, I whis-per in your ear?

p

p

(Ped.)

* High glissando on strings inside piano

F freely, quickly

68 *pp playfully*

I would love to kiss you. I would love to kiss you. ^{8va} "The price of kiss-ing is your

pp

(Ped.)

G a tempo ♩ = 108

71

life."

p

Ped. sim.

74 *mf*

Now my lov - ing is run - ning toward my life shout - ing

mf

77 *f* at a jaunty tempo ♩ = 152

"What a bar - gain, let's buy it."

f

^{8va}

81

84 **H** fluid, as curtains blowing in the breeze rit.

87 (rit.) *p $\text{♩} = 132$ mf 3

The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.

90 p lovingly mf p

Don't go back to sleep. You must ask for what you

* She is telling her lover of the mysteries of life...he prefers to go back to sleep!

93 *p* *mf* *slight reprimand*
 real - ly want. Don't go back to sleep.

mf *p* *cresc.* *mf*
 3 3

I
 96 *cresc.*
 Peo - ple are go - ing back and forth a - cross the door - sill where the two worlds -

p *cresc.*

99 *(cresc.)* *mf* *f*
 touch. The door is round and o - pen,

(cresc.) *mf* *f*
 rit.

102 *p* *f* *spoken in disgust!*
 o - - - - - pen. *8va* Don't go back to sleep (!)

p *cresc.* *ff*

105 at a jaunty tempo slightly faster than before ♩ = 168

8va
3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3
loco
3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

f

J

109

mf playfully

113

mf

Come to the orch - ard

117

in Spring. — There is light and wine, and

5 5 5 5

120

sweet - hearts in the pom - e - gra - nate - flowers.

123

Come to the orch - ard

127

in Spring, in Spring,

131

in Spring, in Spring, in Spring. la, la, la, la, la, la, la,

f *playfully*

Red.

4. The Sunrise Ruby

Very peacefully ♩ = 72

sustain Ped. & soft Ped.

5 *p*

In the ear - ly morn - ing hour, ————— just be - fore dawn, —

(sus. + soft Peds.)

9

— lo - ver and be - lov - ed wake and take a drink of

(sus. + soft Peds.)

12

wa - ter.

8va

loco

(sus. + soft Peds.)

15

(hum)

rit.

Slower, more freely

mf

mm

She asks, "Do you love me or your-self more?"

(sus. + soft Peds.)

18

mf

3

poco rit.

Real-ly tell the ab-so-lute truth."

mf

19

A

Slightly faster ♩ = 80

p

with gentle motion

p

Ped. sim.

He says,

26

Is it still a stone, or a world made of red - ness?

28

It has no re - sis - tance to sun - - - - light."

p *mp*

30

B

cresc.

32

p (as a background sonority)

Ah.

(*cresc.*) *f* *p* *cresc.*

Ped. sim.

34

Ah.

(cresc.) - - - - - **f** *p* cresc. - - - - -

6 6

36

(cresc.) 6 6 6 6 **f** *p* cresc. - - - - -

8va

6 6

38

(8va) - - - - -

(cresc.) - - - - - **f**

6 6 6 6

39

C *f* passionately

"There's noth - ing left of me. - - - - -"

(*f*) 6 6 6

40

6

41

There's noth - ing left of me

6

42

I'm like a

6

43

ru - by held up to the sun - rise, a

6

44

ru - - - by held up to the

45

sun."

p cresc.

47

(cresc.)

48

(cresc.) f

5. Dualities*

a. "insomnias"

[Singer moves forward] ♩ = 96 Leisurely tempo

p gently

When I am with you, we stay up all night. —

pp repeat note pattern rapidly, blurred, unmeasured thru m. 8

Sustain & Soft Ped.

4

When you're not here, I

L.H. p gently (*pp*)

(Sust., Sft. Ped.)

7 *frustrated!*

can't go to sleep. Praise God for these two in -

f gruffly

(Sust., Sft. Ped.)

Detailed description: The score is for a piano and voice. It consists of three systems. The first system (measures 1-3) features a vocal line with lyrics 'When I am with you, we stay up all night. —' and a piano accompaniment with a 'pp' dynamic and a 'repeat note pattern rapidly, blurred, unmeasured thru m. 8' instruction. The second system (measures 4-6) has lyrics 'When you're not here, I' and includes a piano part with 'L.H. p gently' and '(pp)' dynamics. The third system (measures 7-9) has lyrics 'can't go to sleep. Praise God for these two in -' and features a piano part with 'f gruffly' dynamics. The score includes tempo markings, dynamics, and performance instructions like 'Sustain & Soft Ped.' and 'frustrated!'.

* These are musical aphorisms—short commentaries on the dual nature of love. It is suggested that the singer sing each section from a different location on the stage.

rit. *p* Slowly *a tempo*

10 *3* *3*

som - ni - as! — And the dif - ference be - tween them.

8^{va} 15^{ma}

p *f*

8^{vb}

b. "meetings"

[Singer mover to different location]

♩ = 132 As a gentle Tango

p *mp*

Ped. sim.

5

The

9

min - ute I heard my first love sto - ry — I start - ed

12

look-ing for you, _____ not know - ing how

15

blind that was. _____

18

mf

mf

Lov-ers don't fi - nally meet some - where, _____

21

rit. *mf* more slowly and freely *ff*

don't meet some - - where. They're in each

ff

8vb_1

24 *p* ,

oth - er all a - long, each oth - er all a - long. They're in each oth - er

(*ped.*)

27 *a tempo* ♩ = 132

all a - long.

p

31 *rit.*

pp

c. "mirrors"

[Singer moves to different location]

♩ = 96 Relaxed tempo

*repeat note pattern rapidly,
blurred, unmeasured*

p

Ped. sim.

4 *p*

We are the mir - ror as well as the face in it.

7

We are tast - ing the taste this min - ute of e - ter - - -

10 *mf* *f* rit. . . . slightly slower, *mf*

ni - ty. — We are pain and what cures pain, — both. — We are the

14 *p*

sweet cold wa - ter and the jar that

a tempo

16

pours. ————— We are pain and what cures pain, —

f

rit. 3

19

(rit.) . . . slightly slower

mf *p*

— both. — We are the sweet cold wa - ter and the

21

a tempo

jar that pours. —————

23

d. "stones"

[Singer moves to different location]

♩ = 72 Slowly, as if gently strumming a lute

more quickly ♩ = 108

Soft Ped. (Sft.) & Sust. Ped.

6 *p*

I want to hold you close like a lute, so we can cry out with

sim.

(Sft. & Sust. Ped.)

10 *rit.*

lov - ing, with lov - - - - ing.

sim.

(Sft. & Sust. Ped.)

6. A Waterbird

(Flying into the Sun)

♩ = 108 Gently

The first system of the musical score is in 4/4 time. It begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand. The left hand has a whole rest. The right hand continues with a series of chords and eighth notes. A bracket under the first three measures is labeled *Ped. sim.*

4

The second system starts at measure 4. The right hand has a whole rest for the first three measures, followed by a piano (*p*) dynamic and a melody. The left hand plays a steady accompaniment of chords. The lyrics "What I want is to" are written below the right-hand staff.

8

The third system starts at measure 8. The right hand has a whole rest for the first measure, followed by a melody. The left hand continues with the accompaniment. The lyrics "see your face in a tree, in the sun com-ing out, in the air." are written below the right-hand staff.

12

15 **A**

What I want is to hear the fal-con drum, and light a-gain on your fore - arm.

19 **B** *mf*

To — see in — ev - ery palm your

23

el - e-gant sil - ver coin sha - vings, ——— to — turn with the wheel of the

27 *mf*

rain, to fall with the fall - ing bread.

mf

30 *p* (*p*) **C**

What I want, what I want, what I

p

33 *cresc.*

want, what I want, what I want is to see your face,

cresc.

36 *(cresc.)* *f*

your face,

(cresc.) *f*

rit.

♩ = 108
a tempo
mf

40

To —

43 **D**

swim like a huge — fish in o - cean wa - - - ter,

(bring out this 'fish' motive) →

46

to be Ja - cob — rec - og - ni - zing Jo - seph. To be a

rit.

Slower, freely

49

cresc. — — — — — *f* ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^

des - ert moun - tain in - stead of a ci - ty. I'm tired of cow - ards. I

cresc. — — — — —

rit. E a tempo ♩ = 108

52
want to live with li - ons, with Mo - ses.

55
I want to sing like birds sing,

58
not wor - ry - ing who hears, or

61
what they think. I am a

64 *mf*

wa - ter - bird, a

mf

3

66 *cresc. to m. 74*

wa - - - ter - - - bird

cresc. 5

3

68 *accel. (cresc.)*

fly - - - ing in - - - to the

5

5

F *Faster* ♩ = 120

70 *(cresc.)*

sun.

(cresc.)

74 *f* $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$

— What I want, what I want, what I want, what I want, what I want, what I want is to

78 $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ rit. a tempo $\text{♩} = 120$

see your face, to see your face, to see your face, to see your face. Be-yond want-ing,—

81 accel. *cresc.* — — — — —

be-yond place, be-yond want-ing,—

83 (accel.) **G** Quickly $\text{♩} = 132$ *f*

be-yond place. I —

Red. Val.

85

am a wa - - - ter - - - bird,

(Ped.) Ped. sim.

87

Ped.

89

fly - - - - ing,

(Ped.) Ped. sim.

92

fly - - - - ing in - - -

(Ped.) Ped. sim.