

## Program Notes

*The Great Trees* are musical settings of poetry by Wendell Berry (b. 1934). The poetry and music focus on the beauty and spirituality of nature — trees, birds, still water — “one household, high and low.”

Five poems have been selected for this set. The first, third and fifth poems are generally descriptive in character: quiet beauty, *The Peace of Wild Things*, a clearing in the woods, *The Dark Around Us* and great trees rising to heaven, *The Timbered Choir*. These songs are scored for SATB chorus and piano with and without clarinet. The second and fourth poems are more introspective: *The Silence* and *The Steps of the City* and are composed for solo voice, clarinet and piano.

The clarinet is a featured element in this work. It was chosen for this role due to its gentle, “wood”-wind sonority and appearance. In the first song, the clarinet portrays a lone bird in flight. In the second one, it provides commentary to the solo voice. The clarinet becomes the essence of the dance in the fourth song and rises in range with the great trees in the finale.

*The Great Trees* is an expression of ecstatic reverence for the spiritual presence in nature. This expression ranges from the peaceful reverence of the “grace of the world” to the celebratory reverence of “O light come down to earth, be praised!”

—Gwyneth Walker

**Total duration: 13'15"**

### **The Peace of Wild Things**

When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children’s lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

—Wendell Berry

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### **Publisher’s Note**

The clarinet part, Catalog No. 7749, is available for sale.

*Commissioned by the Wolf River Singers, Ben J. Legett, Director,  
through the Choral Commissioning Project and a gift from Bob and Deb Cameron in memory of Edwin K. Dimes  
Premiere performance: March 6, 2010, Germantown, Tennessee*

# The Great Trees

## 1. The Peace of Wild Things

*for Soprano and Tenor Soli, SATB Chorus, Clarinet and Piano*

Wendell Berry (b. 1934)

Gwyneth Walker

**B♭ Clarinet**      **Piano**

**Rubato ♩ = ca. 100 [not conducted]**

**p peacefully as a lone bird in flight**

**Rubato ♩ = ca. 100 [not conducted]**      *roll fingers gently on piano lid\**

**Cl.**      **Piano**

**pp echo**      *roll fingers gently on piano lid*

**p**

**Cl.**

**mf**

**[begin conducting]**      *sneak a breath if necessary*

**(Ped.)**      **Ped.**

\* Roll fingers on piano lid to simulate a bird's fluttering wings.

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15

Cl. *dim.* *p*

Sop. Solo *mf esp.*

When des -

*pp barely audible*

*(Péd.)*

17 A

Sop. Solo pair for the world grows in me

A

*(Péd.)*

19 \*

Cl. *(p)*

Sop. Solo and I wake in the night at the

*(Péd.)*

\* Grace notes precede the beat.

21

Cl.

Sop. Solo least sound \_\_\_\_\_

Ten. Solo *mf espr.* in

(Ped.)

23

Ten. Solo fear of what my life and my chil - dren's lives may

(Ped.)

25

Cl. *mf*

Ten. Solo be,

(Ped.)

27 **B**

Cl. *p*

S *p*  
I go, I

A *p*  
I go, I

T *p*  
I go, I

B *p*  
I go, I

**B**

*p gently*

*Reed.*

31

Cl. *p*

S go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his beau-ty on the wa-ter, \_\_\_\_\_

A go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his beau-ty on the wa-ter, \_\_\_\_\_

T go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his beau-ty on the wa-ter, \_\_\_\_\_ and the

B go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his beau-ty on the wa-ter, \_\_\_\_\_

(*Reed.*)

36

rit.

**C** *a tempo* ( $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 100$ )

(*p*)

S

A

T

great her-on feeds.

B

the great her-on feeds.

I

(*p*)

I

(*p*)

I

unis.

I

rit.

**C** *a tempo* ( $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 100$ )

(*p* gently)

Ped.

40

S

come in - to the peace of wild things who do not tax their lives with fore-thought of

A

come in - to the peace of wild things who do not tax their lives with fore-thought of

T

come in - to the peace of wild things who do not tax their lives with fore-thought of

B

come in - to the peace of wild things who do not tax their lives with fore-thought of

come in - to the peace of wild things who do not tax their lives with fore-thought of

come in - to the peace of wild things who do not tax their lives with fore-thought of

come in - to the peace of wild things who do not tax their lives with fore-thought of

come in - to the peace of wild things who do not tax their lives with fore-thought of

(Ped.)

43

Cl. (p) **D**

S grief. I come in-to the pres-ence of still wa - ter. And I feel a -

A grief. I come in-to the pres-ence of still wa - ter. And I feel a -

T grief. I come in-to the pres-ence of still wa - ter. And I feel a -

B grief. I come in-to the pres-ence of still wa - ter. And I feel a -

**D**

47

Cl. rit.

S bove me the day - blind stars wait-ing with their light. For a

A bove me the day - blind stars wait-ing with their light. For a

T bove me the day - blind stars light. For a

B bove me the day - blind stars light. For a rit.

**Led.**

50 **E Slower**

S time I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

A time I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

T time I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

B time I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

**E Slower** *for rehearsal only*

54 *a tempo (♩ = 100)*

Cl. *mf*

S *p*

A *p*

T *p*

B *p*

*rit.*

*a tempo (♩ = 100)*

*p*

*Ped.*

58 **F Slower**

Cl. *p*

S I go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his beau-ty on the

A I go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his beau-ty on the

T I go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his beau-ty on the

B I go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his beau-ty on the

**F Slower**

61

Cl. *mf* *p*

S wa - ter, \_\_\_\_\_ , and am

A wa - ter, \_\_\_\_\_ , and am

T wa - ter, on the wa - ter, I rest in the grace of the world, and am

B wa - ter, on the wa - ter, I rest in the grace of the world, and am

*div.* *3* *div.* *3* *div.*

*8va*

**G** *a tempo, (♩ = 100) as the beginning*

65

Cl. *mf*

S free.

A free.

T *8* free.

B free.

**G** *a tempo, (♩ = 100) as the beginning*

70

Cl. *pp*

S *pp*

A *pp*

T *pp*

B *pp*

*rit.*

\* *roll fingers on piano lid*

\*The *ossia* (Clarinet) and bracketed (Piano) passages are an alternate ending if the performance is not to continue into the next song. If proceeding, the Clarinet plays the full-size notes as written and the piano is tacet for measure 73.

2009  
3'30"