

A STAR in the EAST

Three Carol Settings

by

Gwyneth Walker

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Premiered at Emmanuel Episcopal Church
of Petoskey, Michigan, on December 24, 2020

André Strydom, organist, Judith Zorn, soprano,
with musicians from the Great Lakes Chamber Orchestra

PROGRAM NOTES

Christmas Eve 2020 was a special time. Although choirs could not gather for group singing during this pandemic, soloists were ready. And therefore, new music for solo voice with instruments (brass, percussion, and organ) was created for this year. The title is *A Star in the East*. These are three songs (revisiting traditional carols) which combine the intimacy of a solo voice with the varied instrumental timbres. [New versions for two-part treble chorus and SATB chorus were soon added.] A central message is the tenderness of the Mother's love for Child. The gift is of the heart.

The first song in the set is a traditional French carol "Bring a Torch, Jeannette, Isabella." There is joy for those coming to the manger. And Mary, guarding her sleeping son, must quiet the noisy shepherds! *Hush! Hush! Ah! que l'enfant est beau! [Ah! the beautiful son!]*

"In the Bleak Midwinter" (text by Christina Rossetti) follows next. In order to suggest *bleakness* of landscape, the music opens with a low, sustained chord in the organ. Above this *barren land* floats the melody played by the French horn. Maracas add a touch of quiet, peaceful slumber.

The voice enters to present the four verses, each with an increasingly active accompaniment. Finally comes the plaintive question of *What can I give him, poor as I am?* This is repeated with urgency until the answer brings resolution: *I would give my heart*.

"Rise Up, Shepherd, and Follow" presents a new dimension to the Nativity story. For it is shepherds (i.e., working-class folk) who follow the star to Bethlehem, in contrast with the Magi (kings). The shepherds travel by foot, perhaps at a jaunty, swing-rhythm pace. They heed the angel's word: *You'll forget your flock, you'll forget your herd*. And thus, they leave behind all that they own to witness the Savior's birth.

—Gwyneth Walker

Gwyneth Walker (b. 1947)

For biographical information visit:
www.gwynethwalker.com

TEXTS

Bring a Torch, Jeannette, Isabella

Bring a torch, Jeannette, Isabella,
Bring a torch, to the cradle run!
It is Jesus, good folk of the village;
Christ is born and Mary's calling;
Ah! ah! beautiful is the Mother!
Ah! ah! beautiful is her Son!

Ah! Que la mere est belle!

Quiet, all, don't waken the baby;
Quiet, all, and whisper low.
Silence as you gather around him,
Lest your noise awaken Jesus.
Hush! hush! Quietly now he slumbers;
Hush! hush! Quietly now he sleeps!

Voyez comme il dort!

Softly to the little stable,
Softly for a moment come;
Look and see how sweet is Jesus.
See how he smiles! With cheeks so rosy!
Hush! hush! Quietly now he slumbers;
Hush! hush! Quietly now he sleeps!
Ah! ah! beautiful is the Mother!
Ah! ah! beautiful is her Son!

Que l'enfant est beau!

Traditional French carol
alt. Gwyneth Walker

Rise up, Shepherd, and Follow

There's a star in the East on Christmas morn,
Rise up, shepherd, and follow.
It will lead to the place where Jesus is born,
Rise up, shepherd, and follow.

REFRAIN

Follow, follow,
Rise up, shepherd, and follow.
Follow the star of Bethlehem.
Rise up, shepherd, and follow.

In the Bleak Midwinter

In the bleak mid-winter
Frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone.
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,
Snow on snow,
In the bleak mid-winter
Long ago.

Heaven cannot hold Him
Nor can earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away
When He comes to reign.
In the bleak mid-winter
A stable warm sufficed
Our Lord God Almighty,
Our Savior Jesus Christ.

Angels and archangels
May have gathered there.
Cherubim and seraphim
Thronged the evening air,
But his mother only,
In her maiden bliss,
Worshipped the Beloved
With a tender kiss.

What can I give Him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd,
I would give a lamb,
If I were a wise one,
I would do my part,
But what can I give Him,
I would give my heart.

Christina Rossetti
alt. Gwyneth Walker

Leave your sheep and leave your lambs.
Rise up, shepherd, and follow.
Leave your ewes and leave your rams.
Rise up, shepherd, and follow. (*Refrain*)

If you take good heed to the angel's word.
Rise up, shepherd, and follow.
You'll forget your flock; you'll forget your herd.
Rise up, shepherd, and follow. (*Refrain*)

—Traditional spiritual

A Star in the East

for Two-Part Treble Chorus, Brass Quintet, Percussion and Organ

Gwyneth Walker

1. Bring a Torch, Jeannette, Isabella

Traditional French Carol

With joyful energy ♩ = 66

Piano
(reduction)

The piano reduction for the first system is in 3/8 time, key of D major. The right hand features a melody of eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes. The dynamic is marked *mf*. A *with pedal* instruction is written below the left hand.

The vocal and piano accompaniment for the first system. The vocal part is for Soprano (S) and Alto (A) voices, marked *unis.* and *mf lightly*. The lyrics are: "Bring a torch Jean-nette, Is - a - bel - la! Bring a torch to the cra - dle run!". The piano accompaniment continues with chords and single notes, marked *mf*.

The vocal and piano accompaniment for the second system. The vocal part begins at measure 17 with the lyrics: "It is Je - sus, good folk of the vil - lage; Christ is". The piano accompaniment features a "running" motive in the left hand, marked *p*, and continues with chords and single notes, marked *mf*. Section markers **A** and **B** are present above the piano part.

24 C *p* *delicately*

born and Mar - y's call - ing. Ah! Ah!

(as a call in the distance)

31

beau-ti - ful is the moth - er! Ah! Ah! beau-ti - ful is her

38 D *unis.* (unis.) *p* (as a quiet commentary, an "aside")

son. Ah! que la mere est

(Ah! beau - ti - ful moth -

45 E (*p*)

bel - le! Qui - et, all, don't wa - ken the ba - by;

er!) E (*p*) *a quiet sparkling accompaniment*

with pedal

50

[Mary quiets the shepherds]

Qui - et, all, — and whis - per

[The noisy shepherds need quieting!]

f *p*

55

low. Si - lence as you gath - er

[The shepherds keep quiet]

(p)

F **F**

61

round him, lest your noise a - wa - ken Je - sus.

68 **G**

Hush! Hush! qui - et - ly now he slum - bers; Hush!

G

74 H *unis.*

Hush! qui - et - ly now he sleeps. _____

81 *p* (as a quiet commentary, an "aside") I

Vo - yez comme il dort! _____
(See how he sleeps!) _____

mf especially joyous

88 J J

95 *(unis.) mf*

Ah _____

102 **K** *p* lightly, delicately (almost whispered)

Soft - ly to the lit - tle sta - ble,

109 **L**

soft - ly for a mo - ment, come. Look and see how sweet is

116 *mf*

Je - sus. See how he smiles! with cheeks so

123 *f* **M** *p* Hush! Hush!

f **M** *p*

And.

131

qui - et - ly now he slum - bers; Hush! Hush! qui - et - ly

138

now he sleeps. Ah! Ah! beau - ti - ful is the

145

moth - er. Ah! Ah! beau - ti - ful is her son!

153

rit. *Slower* *p* *unis.*

Que l'en - fant est beau!
(Beau - ti - ful is her son!)

rit. *Slower* *p*

2. In the Bleak Midwinter

Christina Rossetti (1830–1894)
G. Walker, alt.

adapted from the hymn tune
by Gustav Holst (1874–1934)

Free tempo, introduction
(to suggest the bleakness of midwinter)

A **Slowly, reverently** ♩ = 92

p

mf cantabile

ped.
(pedal stays throughout, for blurred harmony effect)

6

12 **B**

(mf)

with pedal

18 *poco accel.*

The musical score is written for piano in 4/4 time, featuring a treble and bass clef. It begins with a free tempo introduction in B-flat major, marked 'p' (piano) and 'Free tempo, introduction (to suggest the bleakness of midwinter)'. The introduction consists of a series of chords in the bass and a single note in the treble. This is followed by section A, marked 'A Slowly, reverently' with a tempo of 92 beats per minute. Section A is marked 'mf cantabile' and features a melody in the treble and a harmonic accompaniment in the bass. A 'ped.' (pedal) instruction indicates that the pedal stays throughout for a blurred harmony effect. Section B begins at measure 12, marked 'B', and features a melody in the treble and a harmonic accompaniment in the bass. Section B is marked '(mf)' and 'with pedal'. The score concludes at measure 18, marked '18' and 'poco accel.' (poco accelerando).

C Slightly faster ♩ = 100

Solo (or a few voices)

mf cantabile

23

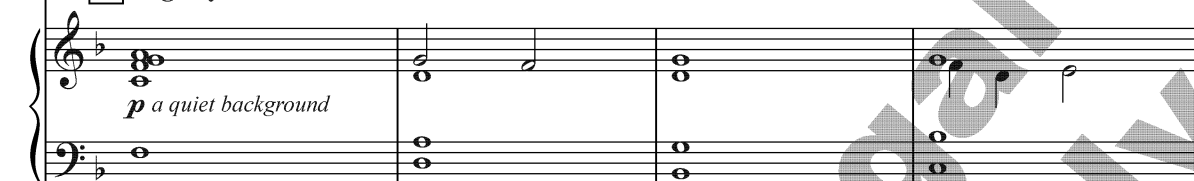
S
A



In the bleak mid - win - ter, frost - y wind made moan.

C Slightly faster ♩ = 100

p a quiet background



27



Earth stood hard as i - ron, wa - ter like a stone.

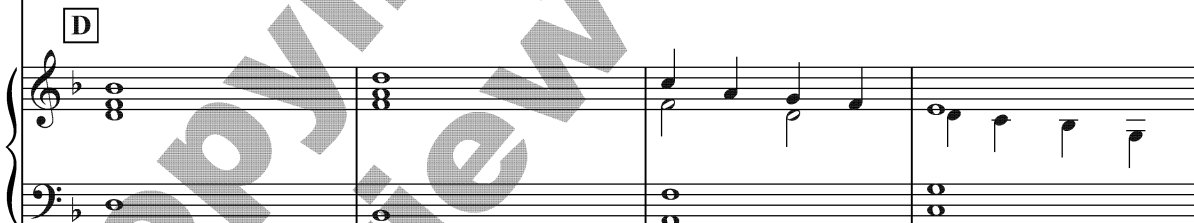


31 **D**

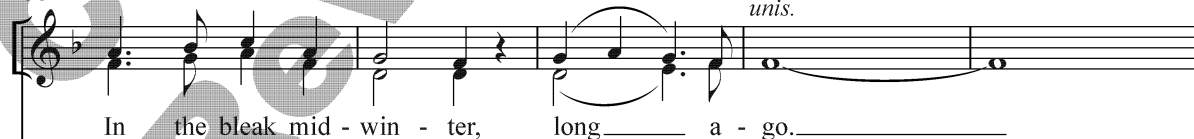
All



Snow had fal - len, snow on snow, snow_ on_ snow.



35



In the bleak mid - win - ter, long_ a - go._



E [Same tempo ♩ = 100]

40

Solo (or a few voices) (mf)

Hea - ven can - not hold him,

E [Same tempo ♩ = 100]

mf

And. simile

44

nor can earth sus - tain. Heaven and earth shall flee a - way

48

F

All

when he comes to reign. In the bleak mid - win - ter, a

F

p

52

sta - ble warm suf - ficed. Our Lord — God al - might - y, our

mf

56

Sa - vior Je - sus Christ.

(*mf*)

G [Same tempo ♩ = 100]

60

An - gels and arch - an - gels

(*mf*)

G [Same tempo ♩ = 100]

p delicately, shimmering

Ped. with pedal

63

may have gath - ered there. Cher - u - bim and

66

ser - a - phim throned the eve - ning air.

69 **H**

But his moth - er on - ly, in her maid - en

72

bliss, wor - shipped the be - lov - ed child

75

with a ten - der kiss.

mf

I **Faster** ♩ = 112, more animated and rhythmic

78 *poco accel.*

mf

What can I give him,

poco accel.

I **Faster** ♩ = 112, more animated and rhythmic

Reo.

82

poor as I am?

If I were a shep-herd,

p

mf

86

I would give a lamb.

If I were a wise one,

p

mf

90

Sop. **J**

I would do my part.

But what can I give him?

J

94 Alto

rit.
f with more urgency

Slower

What can I give him? What can I give him?

rit.

Slower

f

8vb

98

mf *a tempo* (♩ = 100)

I would give _____ my heart, _____

a tempo (♩ = 100)

mf

loco

102 *rit. to end*

p

pp

my heart. _____

rit. to end

p

Reo.

3. Rise Up, Shepherd, and Follow

Traditional African-American spiritual

Relaxed tempo ♩ = 100, swing rhythm (♩ = ♩^3)
(with the joy of seeing the “star of the East”)

Measures 1-3 of the piece. The music is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The tempo is relaxed (♩ = 100) with a swing rhythm. The first measure starts with a forte (f) dynamic. The melody is in the right hand, and the bass line is in the left hand.

Measures 4-7 of the piece. The melody continues in the right hand, and the bass line provides a steady accompaniment. The dynamic remains forte (f).

Measures 8-10 of the piece. Measure 8 is marked with a box 'A' and 'Lively tempo' (♩ = 112). The dynamic changes to mezzo-forte (mf). The melody becomes more active in the right hand.

Measures 11-12 of the piece. Measure 11 is marked with a box 'B' and 'Solo (or a few voices) mf in celebration'. The melody is in the right hand, and the bass line continues. The lyrics 'There's a star in the East on' are written below the staff.

Measures 13-15 of the piece. Measure 13 is marked with a box 'B' and '(with the energy of rising up and following the star)'. The melody continues in the right hand, and the bass line provides a steady accompaniment.

14 *All* *mf* *Solo (or a few voices)*

Christ - mas_ morn.____ Rise up, shep - herd, and fol - low.____ It will

17 *All*

lead to the place where Je - sus is born.____ Rise up, shep - herd, and

20 *Solo (or a few voices)*

fol - low.____ Leave your ewes and leave your lambs.

23 *All* *Solo (or a few voices)*

Rise up, shep - herd, and fol - low.____ Leave your sheep and

26 All

leave your rams. Rise up, shep - herd, and fol - low.

29 **D** *f*

fol - low, fol - low, rise up, shep - herd, and

D *f*

32

fol - low. Fol - low the star of Beth - le - hem.

35 **E**

Rise up, shep - herd, and fol - low.

E *mf*

Solo (or a few voices) mf

If you

41

F

take good heed to the an - gel's_ word. All Rise up, shep - herd, and

44

Solo (or a few voices)

fol - low. You'll for - get your_ flock, you'll for - get your_ herd.

47

All

G *Solo (or a few voices)
emphatically*

Rise up, shep - herd, and fol - low. Leave those ewes and

50 All

leave **those** lambs. Rise up, shep - herd, and fol - low. —

53 Solo (or a few voices) All

Leave **those** sheep and leave **those** rams. Rise up, shep - herd, and —

56 **H** *f*

fol - low. — **H** Fol - low, fol - low,

59

rise up. shep - herd, and fol - low. — Fol - low the star of

62

Beth - le - hem. Rise up, shep-herd,

I

65

rise up, shep-herd, rise up, shep - herd, —

68

and fol - - - - low, —

*

*The singers may “sneak a breath” in this passage if necessary.

71

fol - - - low, _____

74

rit.

fol - low!

rit.

Ped. _____

2:45 | Total 9:30
December 12, 2020
New Canaan, Connecticut