

GWYNETH WALKER

Lessons from the Sea

A Cantata for Women's Chorus, Narrator and Piano

Based on the book *Gift from the Sea*
by Anne Morrow Lindbergh

*Commissioned by Bella Voce Women's Chorus – Burlington, Vermont
Dr. Dawn O. Willis – Music Director*

Duration: 25-30 minutes

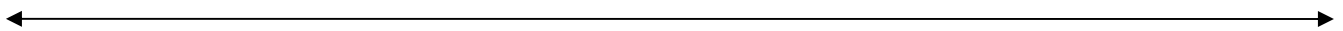
Notes

Lessons from the Sea brings to the concert stage the words of Anne Morrow Lindbergh (1906-2001) in her well-known and much beloved book, *Gift from the Sea* (1955). The author writes of her experiences during a sojourn by the beach, on Captiva Island, Florida. This is a time of reflection upon the demands of her lifestyle – balancing the roles of mother, wife, homemaker, and writer. Although these conflicts (inner and outer) are extreme, they are not unique to Anne Morrow Lindbergh. These are universal concerns for women. And thus, the book has spoken directly to many readers over many generations.

As the author examines shells found on the beach, she finds instruction for her own life: Simplicity (Hermit Crab), Solitude (Moon Shell), and Ebb-and-Flow (Argonauts). These shell explorations form the core of this cantata, and are framed by a Prologue (“The Beach”), and Epilogue (“The Beach at My Back”). Three shells. Three lessons from the sea.

In this cantata presentation, the Narrator portrays Anne Morrow Lindbergh, while the chorus provides commentary, in the role of ALL WOMEN. It is envisioned that adding the musical and staged elements to the reading might bring dramatic life to the words, as a dialogue between author and readers. The musical patterns themselves, especially heard in the piano accompaniment, often portray the waves on the sea, the solitude of the moon shell, or even a hermit crab scurrying across the sand! The choral singing floats above the waves, echoing the words of the Narrator, and expanding upon them. There is time for movement (dance) and even the sounds of a commuter train symbolizing the fast-paced suburban lifestyle.

At the conclusion, the chorus summarizes the entire set of sea lessons in song. And the Narrator wanders off, saying, “There are more shells to find. This is only a beginning.”



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 order to pursue a career as a full-time composer. She now lives on a dairy farm in Braintree, Vermont. Gwyneth Walker is a proud resident of Vermont. She is the recipient of the Year 2000 “Lifetime Achievement Award” from the Vermont Arts Council. Walker’s Catalogue includes over 180 commissioned works for orchestra, band, chorus, and chamber ensembles. The music of Gwyneth Walker is published by E. C. Schirmer of Boston (choral and vocal music) and MMB Music of St. Louis (orchestral and instrumental music). More information concerning Gwyneth Walker can be found on her web site www.gwynethwalker.com.

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by Anne Morrow Lindbergh (1906-2001)
G. Walker, alt.

Gwyneth Walker

I. Prologue – The Beach

On stage, to the side or back, are the women's chorus and piano. The front center of the stage is left free for the NARRATOR. A small table with a few shells and perhaps a beach hat may be placed near the front of the stage. Or, these props may be entirely imaginary. During the prologue, the NARRATOR is either off-stage or to the side of the stage.

Flowing, as waves on the sea ♩ = 66

Piano

Flowing, as waves on the sea ♩ = 66

Piano

p

Ped. Ped. Ped.

5

Ped. Ped. simile

9 **A** *unis.*
p cantabile

S
A

One should lie emp - ty,

A

p non cresc.

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13

o - - - - pen,

p non cresc.

17

choice - less_ as a beach,

p non cresc.

21 **B**

S One should lie emp - ty, o - - - - pen,

A emp - ty, o - - - - pen,

p non cresc.

25

choice - less_ as a beach.

choice - less_ as a beach.

Repeat these 4 measures several times as the NARRATOR moves to center stage, fading out as she begins reading.

29 **C** *p* (hum)

Mm, _____ Mm, _____

p (hum)

Mm, _____ Mm, _____

C *p* *non cresc.*

Narrator: (*from center stage*)

The Beach is not the place to work; to read; write or think. I should have remembered that from other years.

One becomes, in fact, like the element on which one lies, flattened by the sea; bare, open, erased by today's tides of all yesterday's scribblings.

And then... the mind wakes, comes to life again. It begins to drift, to turn over in gentle, careless rolls like those lazy waves on the beach. One never knows what chance treasures these easy unconscious rollers may toss up on the smooth white sand of the conscious mind, what perfectly rounded stone, what rare shell from the ocean floor. Perhaps a channeled whelk, a moon shell, or even an Argonaut.

Patience is what the sea teaches. Patience and faith.

One should lie empty, open, choiceless as a beach – waiting for a gift from the sea.

(*music continues as NARRATOR concludes*)

33 **D** (♩ = 66)

Ped. _____ Ped. _____ simile

37 *unis.*
p cantabile

S
A

One should lie emp - ty,

p non cresc.

Ped. simile

41

o - - - - - pen,

p non cresc.

45

choice - less_ as a beach, wait - ing for a

E **E**

50

gift from the sea.

rit.

rit.

Ped.

II. Channeled Whelk

F Tempo *ad lib.*

“crab” motive ^{8va}

1

p

6

6

Repeat once or twice.
No pedal on repeats.

(Ped.)

* Random chromatically descending 4ths, to resemble a crab scurrying across the beach.

Narrator: (begin as “crab” motive ends)

The shell in my hand is deserted. It once housed a whelk, and then temporarily, a little hermit crab, who has run away, leaving his tracks behind him like a delicate vine on the sand.

I too have run away. I have shed the shell of my life for these few weeks of vacation.

His shell is simple, bare, beautiful. My shell is not like this. How untidy it has become! Blurred with moss, knobby with barnacles, its shape is hardly recognizable any more. Surely, it had a shape once. What is the shape of my life?

(music continues)

G Moderate tempo ♩ = 108

mf

S1

What is the shape of my life? What is the shape of my

S2

What is the shape of my life, is the shape of my life, is the shape of my

A

What is the shape of my life, is the shape of my

G Moderate tempo ♩ = 108

mf l.v.

(Ped.)

6 *poco rit.*

S1 life? _____ I have a fam-i - ly, ___ I have a home, I have work I wish to pur-

S2 life? _____ I have a fam-i - ly, ___ I have a home, I have work I wish to pur-

A life? _____ I have a fam-i - ly, ___ I have a home, I have work I wish to pur-

poco rit.

(Ped.) _____

10 **Slower, recitative** *Solo mf* *a tempo*

S But first of all, ___ I want to be at peace with my-self. _____ (join) *Tutti, mf*

S1 sue. Peace, ___ I want a

S2 sue. Peace, ___ I want a

A sue. Peace, ___ I want a

Slower, recitative *a tempo*

14 **H** *rit.*

S sing-le-ness of eye, a pur-i - ty of in - ten - tion, a cen - tral core to my life.

A sing-le-ness of eye, a pur-i - ty of in - ten - tion, a cen - tral core to my life.

H (for rehearsal only) *rit.*

17 **Slower** *More slowly* (Narrator speaks)

I want to live in grace as much of the time as pos - si - ble, grace... _____

I want to live in grace as much of the time as pos - si - ble, grace... _____

Slower *More slowly*

Narrator: (during the fermata)

I want to live in grace as much of the time as possible.

[PAUSE] (before playing the “crab” motive)

I **Tempo, ad lib.**
“crab” motive
8^{va}

22 *p*

Repeat once or twice.

* Random chromatically descending 4ths, to resemble a crab scurrying across the beach.

(Narrator continues as “crab” motive ends)

During the following reading, the chorus provides background sounds [J], beginning as marked, to simulate a commuter-train fast-pace of life, perhaps starting with a few voices, and adding others. Additional voices enter in counterpoint [K], at the conductor's discretion, as the reading continues.

Narrator: (*continues as "crab" motive ends*)

I mean to lead a simple life, to choose a simple shell I can carry easily – like a hermit crab.
But I find that my frame of life does not foster simplicity.

(*Chorus begin background sounds [J] add counterpoint [K] as reading continues*)

23 **J** Background sounds
p

ch ba da ba da ch ba da ba da ba

24 **K** Counterpoint (*enter as cued*)
p

tsss — tsss tsss

Detailed description: The image shows two musical staves. The first staff, labeled '23 J Background sounds', is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It begins with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The notation consists of a series of rhythmic patterns: a quarter note followed by a quarter rest, a quarter note followed by a quarter rest, and a quarter note followed by a quarter rest, all marked with a dynamic of 'p'. The second staff, labeled '24 K Counterpoint (enter as cued)', is also in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp. It begins with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The notation consists of a series of rhythmic patterns: a quarter note followed by a quarter rest, a quarter note followed by a quarter rest, and a quarter note followed by a quarter rest, all marked with a dynamic of 'p'. The text 'ch ba da ba da ch ba da ba da ba' is written below the first staff, and 'tsss — tsss tsss' is written below the second staff.

(*Narrator continues without interruption*)

The life I have chosen as a wife and mother entrains a whole caravan of complications. It involves food and shelter; meals, marketing, bills, countless experts [to] keep my modern house functioning.

(*counterpoint begins to enter*)

It involves health: doctors, dentists, medicine, vitamins, trips to the drugstore. Education: school conferences, car-pools, basketball or orchestra practice; tutoring; camps. Shopping, laundry, cleaning, mending.

(*tempo and dynamics of background sounds increase to chaos; chorus starts to sway or bob up and down in time with the rhythms*)

It involves friends, my husband's, my children's, my own: endless arrangements to get together; letters, invitations, telephone calls, transportation hither and yon.

[STOP] *Background sounds*

Chorus: *spoken*

Ah! (*a sign of exhaustion*)

[PAUSE]

Narrator:

What a circus act we women perform every day of our lives. Look at us. We run a tight rope daily, balancing a pile of books on the head. Baby-carriage, parasol, kitchen chair, still under control.

Steady Now!

Chorus:

Steady now!

Narrator:

What is the answer? I have only clues, shells from the sea. The bare beauty of the channeled whelk tells me that perhaps a first step is in simplification of life.

My little channeled whelk will sit on my desk to remind me of the ideal of a simplified life. To ask how little, not how much, can I get along with. To say – is it necessary? – when I am tempted to add one more accumulation to my life, when I am pulled toward one more activity.

(Pauses while “crab” motive is played)

25

“crab” motive

8^{va}

p

6

6

Play two times

* Random chromatically descending 4ths, to resemble a crab scurrying across the beach.

Narrator: *(continuing)*

One is free, like the hermit crab, to change one's shell.

(music continues)

26 **L** *Slowly*

S *p* *mf*
 One is free, like the her-mit crab, to change one's shell.

A *unis. p* *mf*
 One is free, like the her-mit crab, to change one's shell.

31 **M** *a tempo* (♩ = 66)

p *Solo mf*
 Ah, _____

p *Solo p*
 Ah, _____

36 *(mf)*

ah, _____

(p)
 ah, _____

40 *p*

44 *rit.*

Ped. _____ (*sustain sonority into the start of next reading*)

III. Moon Shell

Narrator: (*allow piano sonority to ring for a moment, then begin reading while it fades.*)

This is a snail shell, round, full and glossy as a horse chestnut. Milky and opaque, it has the pinkish bloom of the sky on a summer evening, ripening to rain. On its smooth symmetrical face is penciled with precision a perfect spiral, winding inward to the pinpoint center of the shell, the tiny dark core, the pupil of the eye. It stares at me, this mysterious single eye – and I stare back. Now it is the moon, solitary in the sky. Now it is an island, set in ever-widening circles of waves, alone, self-contained, serene.

How one hates to think of oneself as alone. How one avoids it. We seem so frightened today of being alone that we never let it happen. When the noise stops there is no inner music to take its place. We must re-learn to be alone. Only when one is connected to one's own core is one connected to others. And, for me, the core, the inner spring, can best be refound through solitude.

(*music begins*)

14

1 **N** **Slowly, gently**
Tutti p

S Sol - i - tude, says the Moon Shell, sol - i - tude.

A Sol - i - tude, says the Moon Shell, sol - i - tude.

N **Slowly, gently**

5

poco cresc. **3**

Ev - 'ry wom - an should be a - lone some - time dur - ing the year, some

Ev - 'ry wom - an should be a - lone some - time dur - ing the year, some

(for rehearsal only)

O With motion ♩ = 132

9 *mf*

part of each week, and each day.

part of each week, and each day.

O With motion ♩ = 132

mf

Ped.

14 *Solo mf*

These are a-mong the most im - por - tant times in one's

p

(Ped.)

18 life - when one is a - lone. *slight rit.* **P** *Slower* ♩ = 120

Tutti p a - lone. *Tutti f* Wom - en need sol - i - tude in

p a - lone. *f* Wom - en ...sol - i - tude in

slight rit. **P** *Slower* ♩ = 120

Ped. *Ped.* *Ped.*

23

or - der to find a - gain the true es - sence of them - selves.

or - der to find a - gain the true es - sence of them - selves.

Ped.

l.v.

27

Sol - i - tude, says the Moon Shell.

Sol - i - tude, says the Moon Shell. Cen - ter - down. _____

(Ped.) _____

31 **Q** *p (pp in repeats)*

Sol - i - tude. Cen - ter - down.

Sol - i - tude. Cen - ter - down.

(for rehearsal only) _____

Continue repeating these two measures at **pp** through the next reading.

Narrator: (while chorus repeats “Solitude. Center-down.”)

Moon shell, who named you? I shall give you another name – Island shell. I cannot live forever on my island. But I can take you back to my desk. You will fasten your single eye upon me. You will say to me “solitude.” You will remind me that unless I keep the island-quality intact somewhere within me, I will have little to give my husband, my children, my friends, or the world at large.

(music continues)

33 **R** ♩ = 120

p *poco cresc.* 3

S
Ev - 'ry wom-an should be a - lone some - time dur - ing the

A
Ev - 'ry wom-an should be a - lone some - time dur - ing the

R ♩ = 120

p (for rehearsal only)

36 *mf* **S** *a tempo* ♩ = 66

year, some part of each week, and each day.

mf

year, some part of each week, and each day.

S *a tempo* ♩ = 66

p lightly, as a dance

40

Hand Claps
(Chorus claps rhythm, continuing into next song)

pp

IV. Argonauta

Chorus continues to clap rhythm unobtrusively as the following reading is performed. When the music at [T] (*bottom of this page*) begins as marked, a subtle dance is performed by the chorus or several couples from the chorus. Movements are noted in the score. Hand Clapping continues throughout the section.

Hand claps (*continue unobtrusively behind reading*)



Narrator: (*performed over hand clapping*)

There are in the beach-world certain rare creatures, the “Argonauta,” who are not fastened to their shell at all. It is actually a cradle for the young, held in the arms of the mother Argonaut who floats with it to the surface, where the eggs hatch and the young swim away. Then the mother Argonaut leaves her shell and starts another life.

Lovely shell, lovely image. Is this the symbol for another stage in relationships? Can we Argonauts look forward to the freedom of the nautilus who has left its shell for the open seas?

[BEGIN] *Music and Dance at [T]. NARRATOR and clapping continue without pause.*

A good relationship has a pattern like a dance and is built on some of the same rules. The partners do not need to hold on tightly, because they move confidently in the same pattern, intricate but free, like a country dance of Mozart’s, moving to the same rhythm and being invisibly nourished by it. Lightness of touch and living in the moment are intertwined.

[STOP] *Music, clapping, and dance, NARRATOR continues without break*

[Repeat these 8 bars until stopped]

T (♩ = 66)

Dance movements:

Couples face each other

Face forward

Hand claps

The musical score consists of two staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 2/4. It begins with a repeat sign and contains a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and rests, identical to the hand claps notation above. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 2/4. It begins with a repeat sign and contains a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The tempo marking is *p delicato*. Above the piano staff, there are markings for dance movements: 'Couples face each other' and 'Face forward' are indicated by wavy lines above the notes. The tempo marking **T** (♩ = 66) is also present above the piano staff.

5 face away from each other face forward

Narrator: (*continues when dance section has stopped*)

It is what William Blake was speaking of when he wrote:

*He who bends to himself a joy
Doth the winged life destroy;
But he who kisses the joy as it flies
Lives in eternity's sunrise.*

(*music resumes*)

9 **U** Same tempo (♩ = 66) *p* lightly, as a dance

He who bends to him-self a joy —

unis. p lightly, as a dance

He who bends to him-self a joy —

U Same tempo (♩ = 66) *p* lightly, as a dance

15

doth the wing-ed life de - stroy; _____ but he who kiss-es the
unis. *unis.*

doth the wing-ed life de - stroy; _____ but he who kiss-es the

joy as it flies _____ lives in e - ter - ni - ty's sun - rise. _____

joy as it flies _____ lives in e - ter - ni - ty's sun - rise. _____

rit. *mf* *f*

rit. *mf* *f*

rit. *mf*

Narrator: (*begin as chorus ends. Continue over clapping, piano, and chorus*)

The dancers who are perfectly in time never destroy “the winged life” in each other or in themselves.

[BEGIN] *new clapping pattern and a new dance by the chorus comprised of gentle swaying in an “ebb and flow” manner.*

V $\text{♩} = 66$

24 Hand Claps

[Clapping pattern continues until piano [W] starts, then clapping stops.]

Narrator continues without pausing as the chorus continues clapping and “dancing” until piano begins as marked. At that point, the clapping stops immediately and the swaying gradually tapers off.

Narrator: (*continuing*)

The “veritable life” of our emotions and our relationships is intermittent. When you love someone you do not love them all the time, in exactly the same way from moment to moment. It is an impossibility. And yet this is exactly what most of us demand. We have so little faith in the ebb and flow of life, of love, of relationships. We leap at the flow of the tide and resist in terror its ebb. We are afraid it will never return. We insist on permanency when the only continuity possible is in growth, in freedom – in the sense that the dancers are free, barely touching as they pass, but partners in the same pattern.

[BEGIN] *music*, [STOP] *clapping, swaying tapers off*, *NARRATOR continues*.

26 W (♩ = 66)

Pno. *p* Repeat 4 times, then continue with chorus.

S *pp* Ah, _____

A *pp* Ah, _____ Repeat until reading ends and continue.

Pno. *pp*

Narrator: (*continuing as music is performed*)

Intermittancy. How can one learn to live through the ebb-tides of one’s existence? Perhaps this is the most important thing for to take back from beach-living: simply the memory that each cycle of the tide is valid; each cycle of the wave is valid; each cycle of a relationship is valid.

And my shells? I can sweep them all into my pocket. They are there to remind me that the sea recedes and returns eternally.

(*music continues*)

30 *unis.*
pp X

S Ah, _____

A *pp* Ah, _____ *p* the waves e - cho be -

X

33 *mp*

Pa - tience, Faith,

hind me. _____

36 *mf*

O - pen - ness is what the sea has to teach. Sim - pli - ci - ty, _____

mf

O - pen - ness is what the sea has to teach. Sim - pli - ci - ty, _____

mf

39 *rit.* *f*

So - li - tude, In - ter - mit - ten - cy, In - ter - mit - ten - cy.

So - li - tude, In - ter - mit - ten - cy, In - ter - mit - ten - cy.

rit. *f*

Ped.

42 **Y** *a tempo* ♩ = 66

p

46

repeat these two measures, fading out as reading begins

f

V. Epilogue – The Beach at my Back

Narrator: (*as music fades*)

I pick up my bag. The sand slips softly under my feet. The time for reflection is almost over.

When we start at the center of ourselves, we discover something worthwhile extending toward the periphery of the circle. We find again some of the joy in the now, some of the peace in the here, some of the love in me and thee which go to make up the kingdom of heaven and earth.

(*music begins and continues through the end of this reading*)

Narrator: *(continuing as music plays)*

The waves echo behind me. Patience – Faith – Openness, is what the sea has to teach. Simplicity – Solitude – Intermittency. But there are other beaches to explore. There are more shells to find. This is only a beginning.

Z ♩. = 66

Repeat these 4 measures until the reading ends.

5 **p**

S Ah, _____ ah, _____

(when reading concludes, music continues)

9 **AA** Same tempo **p**

S _____ on - ly _____ a be - gin - ning

A **p** on - ly _____ a be - gin - ning _____

AA Same tempo

13 *unis. p cantabile*

S
A

One should lie emp - ty,

p non cresc.

17

o - - - - pen,

p non cresc.

21

choice - less_ as a beach,

p non cresc.

25

wait - ing for a gift from the sea.

29 **BB**

S One should lie emp - ty,

A emp - ty,

BB
p non cresc.

33

o - - - - pen, choice - less_ as a beach.

o - pen, choice - less_ as a

37 **CC** Slower ♩ = 66 *p*

The sea does not re-ward

beach. The sea does not re-ward

CC Slower ♩ = 66

41 *f*

those who are too an-xious, too greed-y, or, too im - pa - tient.

f *mf*

those who are too an-xious, too greed-y, or, too im - pa - tient. To

44 *mf* *rit.* *f*

shows not on-ly im - pa-tience and greed, but lack of faith.

f

dig for trea-sures shows not on-ly im - pa-tience and greed, but lack of faith.

rit.

Ped.

(Ped.)

47 **DD** *a tempo* (♩ = 66) *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

a few voices in descant

Desc. *mf* gently Ah, ah,

S Pa - tience, pa - tience,

mf gently A Pa - tience, pa - tience,

DD *a tempo* (♩ = 66)

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

49 *rit.* *mf* *3* **Slowly** *unis.* *a tempo* (♩ = 66)

pa-tience is what the sea teach-es.— Pa-tience and faith.

mf *3* *unis.*

pa-tience is what the sea teach-es.— Pa-tience and faith.

rit. **Slowly** *a tempo* (♩ = 66)

P

52 **EE** *Freely, quasi recitative*

Solo mf

I mean to lead a sim-ple life, to choose a

S

A

EE *Freely, quasi recitative*

mf

56 *rit.* **Slowly** *p sub., with delight*

sim-ple shell I can car-ry ea-si-ly— like a her-mit crab.

rit. **Slowly**

58

S *p with delight*
like a her - mit crab.

A *p with delight*
like a her - mit crab.

p

60

S *Tutti p*
One is free, like the her-mit crab, to

A *p*
One is free, like the her-mit crab, to

p

63

Solo *Solo p*
Ah,

S *mf*
change one's shell.

A *mf*
change one's shell.

FF *a tempo* ♩ = 66

*Random chromatically-descending 4ths to resemble a crab scurrying across the beach.

67 *p*

S *Tutti mp*

A *p* Pa - tience.

The waves e - cho be - hind me. —

ped. *simile*

71 *mf*

S Faith, O - pen - ness, is what the sea has to teach. Sim -

A *mf* O - pen - ness, is what the sea has to teach. Sim -

mf

74

pli - ci - ty, — So - li - tude, — In - ter - mit - ten - cy. —

pli - ci - ty, — So - li - tude, — In - ter - mit - ten - cy. —

GG Freely, recited on pitch

77 *f* *S1 div.* *unis. p* *rit.*

But there are other beaches to explore. There are many more shells to find. This is on-ly a be-gin - ning.

f *A2 div.* *unis. p*

But there are other beaches to explore. There are many more shells to find. This is on-ly a be-gin - ning.

GG Freely, recited on pitch

f *rit.*

81 **HH** *a tempo* ♩ = 66 *Alto unis. p*

on - ly a be-gin - ning

HH *a tempo* ♩ = 66

p

85 *p cantabile*

S1 One should be emp - ty,

S2 Ah, emp - ty,

A Ah,

p non cresc.

o - - - - pen, ah,

p non cresc.

93 **II**

S wait - ing_ for a gift from the sea,

A wait - ing_ for a gift from the

II

p non cresc.

97 *rit.*

wait - ing for a gift_ from the sea.

sea, gift_ from the sea.

rit.

Ped.

Narrator: [at the end of the song] *touching (or gesturing towards) the shells*

This is only a beginning,... a gift from the sea.