Gwyneth Walker

Acquaintance With Nature

for SATB Chorus (divisi), Clarinet and Piano

based on the writings of Henry David Thoreau
Commissioned by Northsong, Newport, Vermont
Anne K. Hamilton, Music Director

Premiered by Northsong
May 31, 2002 – Barton, Vermont
Duration: 15’00”

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Notes

The texts for Acquaintance With Nature are taken from Thoreau’s *Walden* and the *Journals*, dating from the 1850s. These writings chronicle the writer’s sojourns in the woods of Massachusetts. But, Thoreau’s exploration is beyond a geographic location. He is seeking the depths of life’s meaning, the truth that comes when one chooses to “live deliberately, to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life.” He wishes to know “an entire heaven and an entire earth!”

His writings are sincere, and often ecstatic – a reverence for the beauty of the woods; a delight in the small berries and cobwebs; the fresh energy of “mornings of creation.” Seeking eternity, he writes, “I would drink deeper; fish in the sky, whose bottom is pebbly with stars.”

Nine short excerpts of Thoreau's writings have been chosen as the basis of the musical interpretation. The Prologue and Epilogue are spoken by a Narrator, with instrumental accompaniment. This is the young writer heading off into the woods, and later returning home. The seven central sections are sung by the chorus, with instrumental accompaniment. The listener might prefer to hear these choral settings as “journal entries” rather than songs. These are brief observations on nature, each focusing on only one or two images or perceptions. One might imagine Thoreau stopping in his walk to examine each detail of the world around him – seeking acquaintance with nature.

–Notes by the composer
Acquaintance with Nature
for SATB Chorus (divisi), Clarinet and Piano

Henry David Thoreau

Gwyneth Walker

At a jaunty tempo $\mathbf{\text{\textit{j} = 126}}$
as if setting out on a walk into the woods

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NARRATOR walks onto stage dressed in simple outdoor clothing.
Narrator:
I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.

I do not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear, nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary.

I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world;

or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.
Remember Thy Creator

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Clarinet

(j = 88)

(uns. p gently)

Re-mem-ber thy cre-a-tor in the days of thy youth.

(uns. p gently)

Re-mem-ber thy cre-a-tor in the days of thy youth.

(p)

(uns. p)

(uns. p)

(uns. p)

(uns. p)

(play only if needed to help chorus)

(uns. p)

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(uns. p)
Rise free from care before the dawn and seek adventures.

Let the

and the night over-take thee everywhere at home.

noon find thee by other lakes, everywhere at home.
Grow wild according to thy nature.

Take shelter under the cloud.

Enjoy the land, but own it

Let the thunder rumble.

Enjoy the land, but own it
I Seek Acquaintance With Nature

Tenor Solo

Clarinet

I want to go soon and live away by the pond,

where I shall hear only the
wind whispering among the reeds.

It will be enough if I shall leave myself behind.

I seek acquaintance with Nature, to
know her moods and her manners. I wish to know an entire—

heaven and an entire— earth!

* These F's can be C's, if that helps with vocal projection.
I Perceive the Spring in the Softened Air

At a lively tempo $\frac{\dot{\text{J}}}{\text{J}} = 132$

Piano

$\text{p}$ lightly, with excitement

una corda sempre (for the entire song)
I perceive the spring in the softened air,

softened air.

simile

poco cresc.

A smoothly, with excitement

p smoothly, with excitement

I perceive the

spring in the softened air, softened air.

poco cresc.
Looking through the transparent vapors, all surfaces look more vivid.

The hardness of winter is relaxed.
D Slower  

I do not know that the woods are ever more beautiful, or affect me more.

E Slowly  

How silent are the woods.

(Sustained, full sound)
I perceive the spring in the softened air.

gradual cresc. to m. 40

F a tempo (q = 132)
I perceive the spring in the softened air.
softened air.

I perceive the spring in the softened air.

I perceive the spring in the softened air.

I perceive the spring in the softened air,
softened air.

I perceive the spring in the softened air,

I perceive the spring in the softened air.

I perceive the spring in the softened air.

I perceive the spring in the softened air.

I perceive the spring in the softened air.
softened air, ah!

softened air, softened air, ah!

softened air, softened air, ah!

spring in the softened air, ah!

ritard.

ritard.

gentle, white-note gliss. to end of keyboard

pedal stays into next song
morning, morning, morning,
morn - ing, morn - ing, morn - ing,

morn - ing, morn - ing, morn - ing,

morning, morning, morning,
morn - ing, morn - ing, morn - ing,

morning, morning, morning,
morn - ing, morn - ing, morn - ing,

morning, morning, morning,
morn - ing, morn - ing, morn - ing,
There are from time to time very rhythmically morning, morning, morning, both in mornings, mornings, both in morning, morning, morning, morning,
summer and in winter, mornings,
summer and in winter, mornings,
morning, morning, morning,
morning, morning, morning,
when especially the world seems to begin a-
when especially the world seems to begin a-
morn, when especially the world seems to begin a-

p with excitement

p with excitement

p with excitement

p
31

Morn - ings,

morn - ings,

35

morn - ings,

ritard.

ritard.
The world has been recreated in the night. Mornings of creation, I

Slower, gently

gradual cresc. to m. 51

It is the poet’s hour, the poet’s hour,

[Morning when we are born, we who have the seeds of life in

(cresc.)

[Play small notes (through m. 52)
as much as needed to support chorus.]
As quickly as possible

morn-ings, morn-ings, morn-ings, morn-ings,

morn-ings, morn-ings, morn-ings, morn-ings,

morn-ings, morn-ings, morn-ings, morn-ings,

morn-ings, morn-ings, morn-ings, morn-ings,

As quickly as possible

morn-ings, morn-ings, morn-ings, morn-ings!

morn-ings, morn-ings, morn-ings, morn-ings!

morn-ings, morn-ings, morn-ings, morn-ings!

morn-ings, morn-ings, morn-ings, morn-ings!

As quickly as possible

morn-ings, morn-ings, morn-ings, morn-ings!

morn-ings, morn-ings, morn-ings, morn-ings!

As quickly as possible

pedal stays into next song

attacca
Dry, Hazy June Weather

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Piano

Slowly, static

It is dry, hazy June weather.

We are

low, black-note cluster played with the palms of both hands

long

"It is dry, hazy June weather."

More of the earth, farther from heaven these days. We are getting

Dry, Hazy June Weather

(3va.)
deeper into the mists of the earth. The season of hope and

promise is past; already the season of small fruits has ar-

promise is past; already the season of small fruits has ar-

promise is past; already the season of small fruits has ar-

slightly higher again
rived, the season when berries are ripe. The

rived, the season when berries are ripe. The

rived, the season when berries are ripe. The

Ah, and we are pre-

Ah, and we are pre-

Ah, and we are pre-
sent-ed with only a few small berries.

sent-ed with only a few small berries.

sent-ed with only a few small berries.

sent-ed with only a few small berries.

FREE MEASURE (not conducted) $\text{ad libitum, using these pitches, create patterns to depict berries falling.}$

random black-note clusters, playfully, to depict berries falling

Piano stops while Clarinet continues

Dew on the Cobwebs

$\text{poco } \text{ad lib.}$
Everywhere there is dew on the scarfs as big as your hand.

They were cobwebs, little gosamer veils, or

cobwebs,
dropped from the fairy shoulders that danced on the grass last

They were dropped by the fairies that danced on the grass last

night,

night,

night,

night,
Everywhere

Everywhere cobwebs,

where there are cobwebs,

everywhere there are cobwebs,

everywhere there are cobwebs and cobwebs,
where, every where! They were dropped from the fairy shoulderers that 
cob webs. They were dropped from the fairy shoulderers that 

danced on the grass last night!
danced on the grass last night!
danced on the grass last night!

Play small notes only if needed to support chorus.

Play in little upward whisking motions

[Conduct in little upward whisking motions]
The First Star is Lit

Clarinet

Slowly and peacefully \( j = 80 \)

Piano

Slowly and peacefully \( j = 80 \)

\[ \sum_w \pi \sum w \sum_j \hat{o} \pi \hat{O} \]

\[ \sum_w \pi \sum w \sum_j \hat{o} \pi \hat{O} \]

6

loco

\[ \sum_w \pi \sum w \sum_j \hat{o} \pi \hat{O} \]

9

loco

\[ \sum_w \pi \sum w \sum_j \hat{o} \pi \hat{O} \]
13

Every day a new picture is painted and framed,

Ev - ery day a new pic - ture is paint - ed and framed,

16

Every day a new picture is painted and framed,

19

Every day a new picture is painted and framed,
lights as the Great Artist chooses,

and the curtain falls.

And then the sun goes down,

and the
And then the long afterglow gives light.

damask curtains glow along the western window.

a - long the west - ern win - dow.

p

ritard.
Quickly, Tempo primo $\dot{q} = 126$

And then the first star is lit, and I go

Quickly, Tempo primo $\dot{q} = 126$

I go

Quickly, Tempo primo $\dot{q} = 126$

D simile
NARRATOR walks to the edge of the stage.
Epilogue

Narrator: words in boldface type approximately align with measures.

Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. I drink at it; but while I
At a gentle pace $\frac{\text{d}}{\text{d}} = 108$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soprano/Alto</th>
<th>Tenor/Bass</th>
<th>Clarinet</th>
<th>Piano</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Piano

una corda

At a gentle pace $\frac{\text{d}}{\text{d}} = 108$

4 drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is.
Its thin currents slide away, but \textit{eternity} remains.

I would drink deeper, whose \textit{bottom} is

fish in the sky,
pebbly with stars.

NARRATOR slowly walks off stage.

I would drink deeper; fish in the sky,

whose bottom is pebbly with
[look up to the sky] stars,
[look up to the sky] stars,
[look up to the sky] stars,
[look up to the sky] stars,
[look up to the sky] stars,
stars,

stars,

stars,

stars,

stars,

stars,

stars,
Duration: 15'00"
February 28, 2002
Braintree, Vermont