

Gwyneth Walker

***The Laughter of Women
and other songs***

based on the poetry of Lisel Mueller

for Mezzo Soprano, Clarinet and Piano

This version for Mezzo Soprano, Clarinet and Piano is a transcription of the original scoring for Soprano, Violin and Piano, commissioned by Donne e Doni Chamber Soloists, Walla Walla, WA – premiered February 4, 2001

Program Notes

The texts for **The Laughter of Women** are found in Alive Together, the 1997 Pulitzer Prize-winning collection of poems by Lisel Mueller. This poetry encompasses a broad spectrum of mood: reverent, irreverent (!), witty, poignant, independent, reflective and triumphant.

The musical interpretations aim to explore the imagery evoked by the poetry. For example, in the opening song, "The Laughter of Women," the jagged patterns introduced in the clarinet might be suggestive of laughter. And the glissandi which occur mid-way through the song are associated with the text of "wipes the spectacles of the old," to be heard, perhaps, as "wiping" motives. The image of fire in this song is suggested by swirling patterns in the piano, later adopted by the clarinet. And daylight shines through, perhaps, in the clarinet high arpeggios..

In general, the voice presents the lyrics, the piano offers the underpinning, and the clarinet is the primary image-translator, offering motives which endeavor to reflect the words. The piano occasionally joins in this activity as well, "scampering" up the keyboard when the words "they laugh as if they were young again" are sung. The listener might therefore enjoy detecting possible correlations between the poetry (as expressed by the singer) and the musical accompaniment.

The poems presented in this work were selected in chronological order from Alive Together. Certainly, "The Laughter of Women," with its energy and triumph, appeals as a strong opening selection. And, "There Are Mornings" closes with its own form of triumph – the transcendent beauty of when "the sky opens and pours itself into me."

Notes About the Composer

Dr. Gwyneth Walker 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, Walker resigned from academic employment in 1982 in order to pursue a career as a full-time composer. She now lives on a dairy farm in Braintree, Vermont.

Walker's catalog includes over 120 commissioned works for orchestra, band, chorus and chamber ensembles. The music of Gwyneth Walker is published by E.C. Schirmer of Boston (choral/vocal music) and MMB Music of St. Louis (orchestral/instrumental music).

Gwyneth Walker is a proud resident of Vermont. She is the recipient of the Year 2000 "Lifetime Achievement Award" from the Vermont Arts Council. In addition, she has been awarded the Orchestral Commission from the Vermont High School All-State Festival for a new work to celebrate the 75th season of the Festival – 2002.

Lisel Mueller

The Laughter of Women

Gwyneth Walker

Clarinet part is not transposed in score.
The extracted part is in B \flat

Clarinet

Soprano

Piano

barely audible

spoken triumphantly:

The laughter of women sets fire
to the Halls of Injustice
and the false evidence burns
to a beautiful white lightness

pp

8va *barely audible*

pp

4

4

4

4

With energy $\text{♩} = 108$

f joyfully

With energy $\text{♩} = 108$

f

Re. ad lib.

4

A

f joyfully

The laugh - ter of wom - - en sets

A

4

5

2

7

fire to the Halls of In - - - jus - - tice. The

10

laugh - ter of wo - - - men sets fire, fire, fire, fire,

13

fire to the Halls of In - - - jus - - tice, and the false rit.

Rit.

The Laughter of Women

16 **B** slower

p

B slower

19 *accel.* *a tempo*

The laugh - ter of wom - en sets

accel. *a tempo*

22

fire, fire, fire, fire, fire to the Halls of In - - - jus - tice.

4

25

rit. C slower

— It rat - tles the Cham - bers of Con - gress and for - ces the win - dows wide

rit. C slower

28

o - - - - pen, wide o - - - - pen, spoken, mockingly So the fatuous speeches can fly out...

accel. a tempo

31

The laugh - ter of wom - en sets

accel. a tempo

35

fire, fire, fire, fire, fire to the Halls of In - - - jus - tice.

5 5 5 5

Reo.

38

D

p f p

fire!

D

p f p

42

p f p

fire!

random clusters scampering up keyboard

p

f Reo. Reo.

45

The laugh - ter of wom - en

E

f p f

p f

48

(as if wiping off eyeglasses)

wipes the mist from the spec - ta - cles of the old.

3

51

The laugh - ter of wom - - - en

wipes the

54

mist, mist, mist _____ from the spec - ta - cles of the _____

Rit.

56

old; it - in - fects them with a hap - py flu, and they

rit. F slower

59

laugh as if they were young a - gain, young a - gain.

p echo

accel. random clusters scampering up keyboard

8

a tempo



The laugh - - ter of wom - en wipes the mist, mist, mist___

a tempo

65

— from the spec - ta - cles of the old. _____

R&d.

67

rit. -----

G slower

pp

p 3 3

Pris - on - ers held in un - der - ground cells im -

rit. -----

G slower

b8

p

69

agine that they see day-light when they re - mem-ber the laugh - ter of wom - en.

71

It runs a-cross wa - ter that di - vides, and rec - on - ciles two un - friend - lt shores like

73

flares that sig - - - nal the news to each oth - - - er.

10

75 **H** Triumphanty $\text{♩} = 72$

What a lan-guage it is, the laugh - ter of wom - en, high - - -

H Triumphanty $\text{♩} = 72$

77 start slowly

spoken softly,
mischievously

sf

fly - ing, high - fly - ing, high - fly - ing and subversive Long be - fore law and scrip - ture

start slowly

79

we heard the laugh - ter, we heard the laugh - ter, we

p

81 *accel.*

11

84

What a lan - guage it is,
the laugh - ter of wom - - en

rit.

86 twice as quickly $\text{♩} = 144$

I

I

free - - - - - - - - - dom,

twice as quickly $\text{♩} = 144$

12

89

free - - - - dom, _____ free - - - -

92

dom. _____

94

a triumphant laugh **f** Ha!

Reo. **f**

Duration: 4'15"

Interlude I

Piano

Freely $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 132$

p throughout, dreamlike

rit. - - - , **a tempo**, **rit.** - - - ,

a tempo **rit.** - - - , **a tempo** **rit.** - - - ,

Ped. _____ Ped. _____ Ped. _____ Ped. _____ Ped. _____ Ped. (D) →

Pedal stays into next song

Duration: 30"

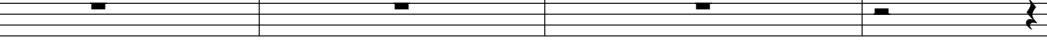
Things

Sprightly ♩ = 144

Clar. 

S 

Sprightly ♩ = 144

Pno. 

What

Pedal stays from previous Interlude until **A**

5 **A**

Clar.  *p*
S 

hap-pened is we grew lone - - - ly, liv-ing a - mong the

9

Clar. *mf*

S things, lone - - - - ly, so we gave the

13 **B**

Clar. *p* *mp* *p* *mf* *p*

S clock a face, the chair a back, the

17

Clar. *f* *p*

S ta - ble, four stout legs, *p* which will

21 key click

Clar. *p* *p*

S nev - er suf - fer fa - tigue. *f*

Things

25

Clar.

C

S

C

We fit - ted our shoes with tongues as smooth as our

29

Clar.

S

own and hung tongues in - side bells so we could lis - ten to

34

Clar.

S

poco accel. 3/4

poco accel. 3/4

their e - mo - tion-al lan - - - guage.

39

Clar.

D *gracefully, slightly faster* ♩ = 176

S

D *gracefully, slightly faster* ♩ = 176

and be - - - cause we loved

45

Clar.

S

mf

Grace - - - - - ful pro - - - - - files

Things

51

Clar. *mf* E *p*

S the pit - cher re - - ceived a

57

Clar. *mf* *p*

S lip, the bot - tle a long slen - - - der

63

Clar. *mf* *rit.* F **Slower** $\text{♩} = 138$ *p*

S neck. *rit.* F **Slower** $\text{♩} = 138$ E - ven what was be-yond us

68

Clar. *mf* $\text{♩} = 120$ *p*

S *gradual rit.* $\text{♩} = 120$ was re - cast in our im - age; we gave the coun-try a heart,

72

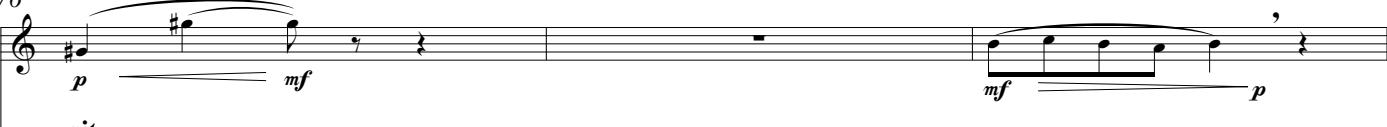
Clar. *mf* *p* *mf*

S the storm an eye, the cave a mouth

Things

rit.

76

Clar. 

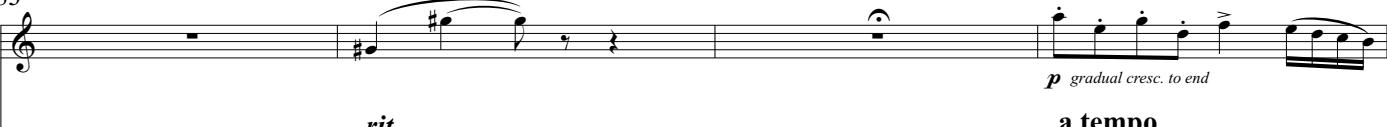
S so we could pass in - to safe - ty, the

79 **G** $\text{♩} = 120$ (as before) *as an echo*

Clar. 

S coun-try a heart, the storm an eye, the

83 *rit.*

Clar. 

S cave a mouth so we could pass in - to safe - ty. *a tempo*

87 *(non rit.)*

Clar. 

S *(non rit.)*

Duration:2'20"

Interlude II

Pno.

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 132$

p

5

rit. - - - - -

a tempo

p

rit. - - - - -

mf

Ped. _____

Ped. _____

10 *a tempo*

mf

Ped. _____

Ped. _____

Ped. _____

Ped. _____

p

(D)

Pedal stays into next reading

Duration: 30"

[Piano pedal stays until midway through reading]

TEARS

(read by Soprano)

*The first woman who ever wept
was appalled at what stung
her eyes and ran down her cheeks.
Saltwater. Seawater.
How was it possible?
Hadn't she and the man
spent many days moving
upland to where the grass
flourished, where the stream
quenched their thirst with sweet water?
How could she have carried these sea drops
as if they were precious seeds;
where could she have stowed them?
She looked at the watchful gazelles
and the heavy-lidded frogs;
she looked at the glass-eyed birds
and nervous, black-eyed mice.
None of them wept, not even the fish
that dripped in her hands when she caught them.
Not even the man. Only she
carried the sea inside her body.*

FUGITIVE

(Optional reading by Pianist or Clarinetist)

*My life is running away with me;
the two of us are in cahoots.*

*I hold still while it paints
dark circles under my eyes,
streaks my hair gray, stuffs pillows
under my dress. In each new room
the mirror reassures me
I'll not be recognized.*

*I'm learning to travel light,
like the juice in the power line.*

*My baggage, swallowed by memory,
weighs almost nothing. No one suspects
its value. When they knock on my door,
badges flashing, I open up:
I don't match their description.*

"Wrong room," they say, and apologize.

*My life in the corner winks
and wipes off my fingerprints.*

SOMETIMES, WHEN THE LIGHT
(Optional reading by Pianist or Clarinetist)

*Sometimes, when the light strikes at odd angles
and pulls you back into childhood*

*and you are passing a crumbling mansion
completely hidden behind old willows*

*or an empty convent guarded by hemlocks
and giant firs standing hip to hip,*

*you know again that behind that wall,
under the uncut hair of the willows*

*something secret is going on,
so marvelous and dangerous*

*that if you crawled through and saw,
you would die, or be happy forever.*

Interlude III

Clarinet Sprightly $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 132$

Piano Sprightly $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 132$

6 rit.

11 a tempo rit.

15 Slower rit.

Duration: 40"

The musical score consists of two staves: Clarinet and Piano. The Clarinet staff begins with a sixteenth-note pattern followed by eighth-note pairs. The Piano staff starts with sustained notes. Both parts transition to a more active section with eighth-note patterns. Measure 6 begins with a dynamic *p*, followed by a ritardando. Measure 11 starts with a dynamic *mf*, followed by another ritardando. Measure 15 begins with a dynamic *mf*, followed by a final ritardando. The piano part includes sustained notes and rhythmic patterns. The clarinet part includes slurs and grace notes. The score spans from measure 20 to 15, ending at 40 seconds.

Naming the Animals

21

Lisel Mueller

Gwyneth Walker

Clarinet
 Soprano
 Piano

D. = 72 as a rocking motion

Un -
til he named the horse "horse",
hoofs left no print on the earth,
black-note clusters

13

manes _____ had not been in - ven - - ted,

black-note clusters

21 A

p *mf*

Un - til he named the

A

(*mf*)

26

cow "cow", no one slept _____ stand - ing

31

up, _____ no one saw through o - opaque eyes, _____

36

— food _____ was on - - ly chewed once.

accel.

40

8va

"horse"

"cow"

accel.

45

B $\text{d} = 80$

f joyously

Réo. sim.

50

55

f

mf

On-ly

p

Naming the Animals

(♩ = 80)

61 C rit.

af-ter he named the fish "fish", did the

C (♩ = 80) rit.

65 Slower

light put on skins of yel - low and sil - ver

cantabile

p colla voce

Slower

69 a tempo ♩. = 80

oil, re - veal-ing it-self as a dan - cer

p delicately p delicately

a tempo ♩. = 80

p delicately

74

and high - jump cham-pion of the world,

79

just as la - - - ter he had to

rit. Slower D

cresc. f (f)

83

, a tempo $\text{♩} = 72$

name the wom - an "love" be -

, a tempo $\text{♩} = 72$

(rit.) (rit.)

87 Free Measure

E $\text{♩} = 72$

fore he could put on the knowledge of who she was, with her small hands.

E $\text{♩} = 72$

(Ped.)

90

p non cresc.

mp — p

(p) mp mf

“horse” “cow” “fish”

p

mp

mf

(Ped.)

rit.

95

mf

p

hold into next song

p

“love”

rit.

p

(Ped.)

Pedal stays into next song

Naming the Animals

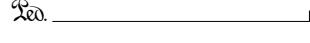
There are Mornings

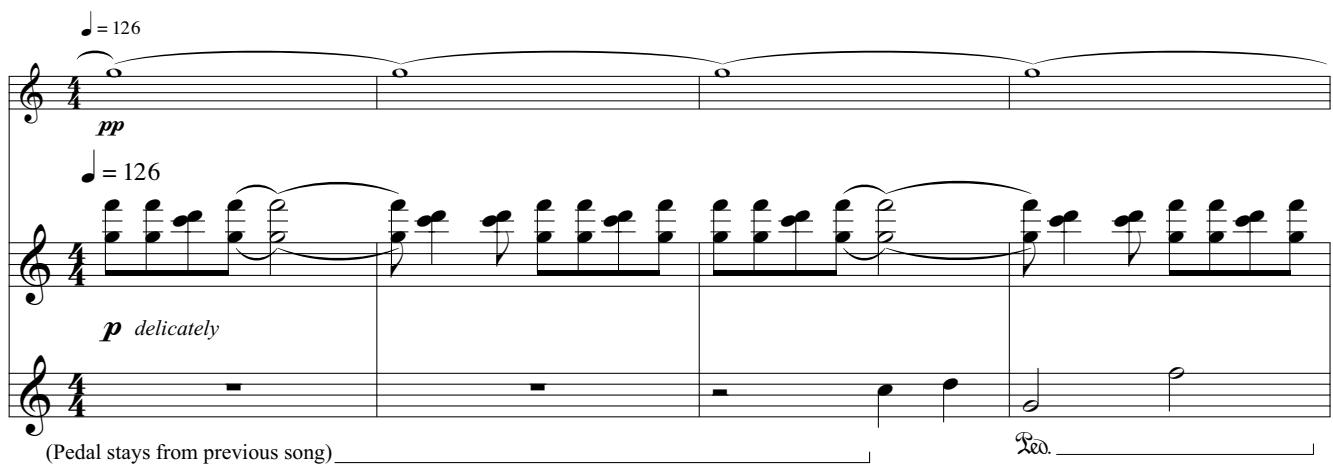
Lisel Mueller

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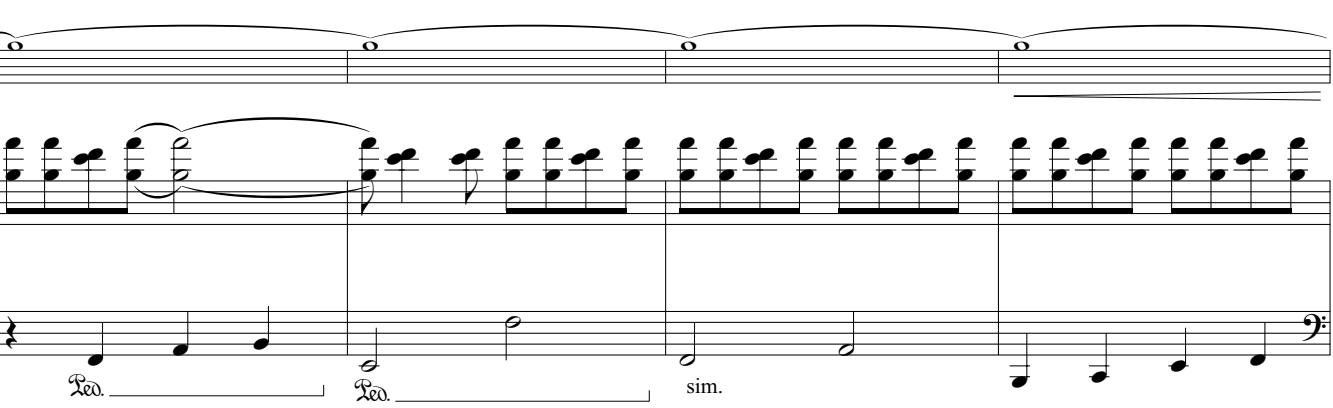
Clarinet

Piano { *p delicately*

(Pedal stays from previous song)  



5



9

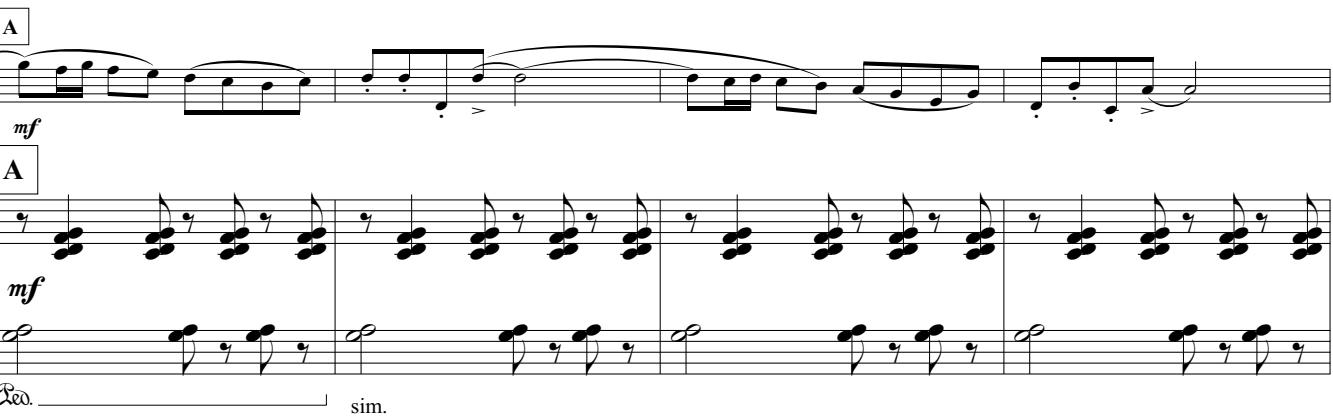
A

mf

A

mf

 sim.



13



17

p

p

una corda

21

B

continue two-measure pattern

spoken gently, with a sense of wonderment

Some mornings in summer I step outside and the sky opens and pours itself into me as if I were a saint about to die.

B

continue one-measure pattern

22

C ($\text{♩} = 126$)

mf

C ($\text{♩} = 126$)

mf

tre corde

26

29

D

E - ven now, when the plot calls for me to turn to

D

33

stone, the sun in - ter -

37

venues, _____ the sun, _____ sun, _____ sun, _____ in - ter -

41

..... venes. _____ Some

45 E

morn - ings in sum - mer _____ I step out - - - side _____ and the sky _____

E

(mf)

49

o - - - - pens and pours

53

— it - self in-to me as if I were a saint a - bout to die.

F

57

poco rit. But the

60 slightly slower, quasi recitative

plot calls for me to live, be ord - i - nar - y, — say noth - ing to an - y - one.

slightly slower, quasi recitative

64 rit. **G** Slowly

(p) In - side the house the mir - rors

G Slowly

rit. **ffr**

burn when I pass.

accel. a tempo ($\text{♩} = 126$)

rapidly, blurred

f

Reo. **f**

70

accel.

71

accel.

74

H Quickly $\text{♩} = 144$

75

H Quickly $\text{♩} = 144$

77

78

There Are Mornings

80

— some morn - ings, — there are

I

83

morn - ings, morn - ings, some morn - ings, some morn - ings, the sky —

I

87

p subito

cresc.

Rit.

There Are Mornings

91 **J**

96

100