Gwyneth Walker The Grace of the World

The poems of Wendell Berry

for High Voice and Piano



- 1. The Peace of Wild Things
- 2. Let Us Meet Here Together
- 3. The Timbered Choir

The Grace of the World

duration: 7 minutes 30 seconds

The poetry of Wendell Berry (b. 1934) is profoundly and beautifully *American*. These words portray the rural landscape, and the creatures who dwell thereon. Natural patterns of worship unfold. The trees (great trees) form a *Timbered Choir* to surround a Meeting Room in the forest. Birds (hopping birds) fill the congregation: *light, leaf, foot, hand and wing – such order as we know*. And over all comes a peace, *The Peace of Wild Things*.

The musical settings use a simple and sparse language, in keeping with the style of the poems. A solo piano line, marked *as a solitary bird in the distance*, opens and closes the first song. The gathering for worship (second song) is often filled with sustained chords (as a group together). Or, the little birds hop about with staccato chords (and many rests!).

Throughout the songs, the vocal line aims primarily for clarity of expression of the text. This is an unadorned message: *I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.*

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.

Let Us Meet Here Together

The dark around us, me, Let us meet here together, Members one of another, Here in our holy room,

Here on our little floor, Here in the daylit sky, Rejoicing mind and eye, Rejoining known and knower,

Light, leaf, foot, hand, and wing, Such order as we know, One household, high and low, And all the earth shall sing.

The Timbered Choir

Slowly, slowly they return
To the small woodland let alone:
Great trees, outspreading and bright,
Apostles of the living light

Patient as stars, they build in air Tier after tier a timbered choir, Stout beams upholding weightless grace Of song, a blessing on this place.

They stand in waiting all around, Uprisings of their native ground. Downcomings of the distant light; They are the advent they await.

Receiving sun and giving shade, Their life's a benefaction made, And is a benediction said Over the living and the dead.

In all their brightened leaves, released, Fly down the wind, and we are pleased To walk on radiance, amazed.

O light come down to earth, be praised!

The Grace of the World

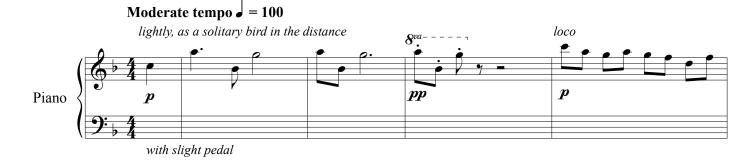
[poems of Wendell Berry]

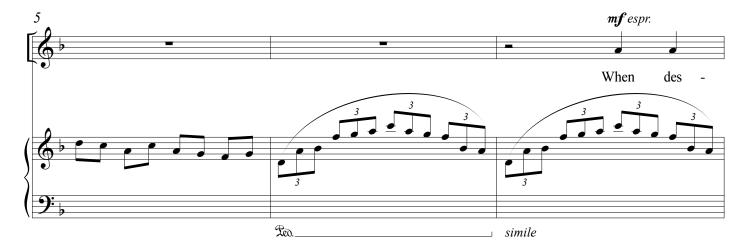
1. The Peace of Wild Things

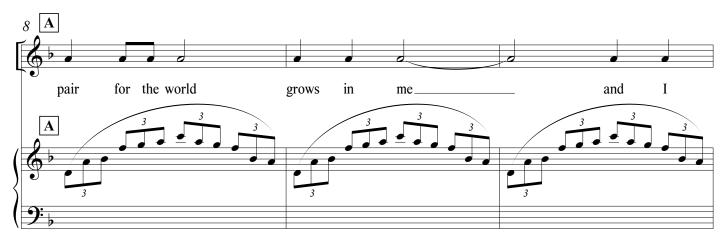
"I rest in the grace of the world... and am free"

Wendell Berry (b. 1934)

Gwyneth Walker







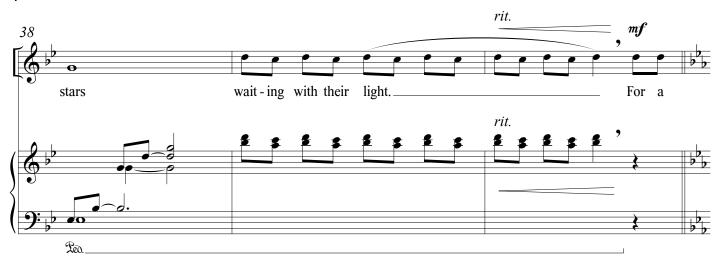
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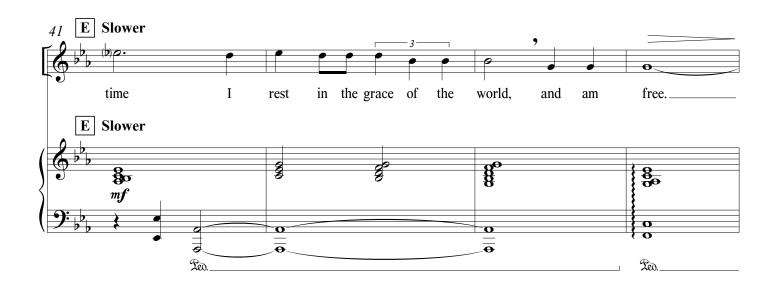


Walker | The Grace of the World | 1. The Peace of Wild Things

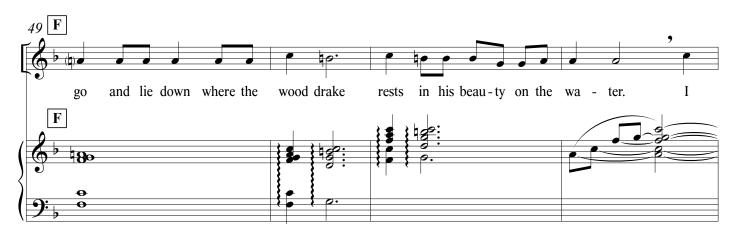


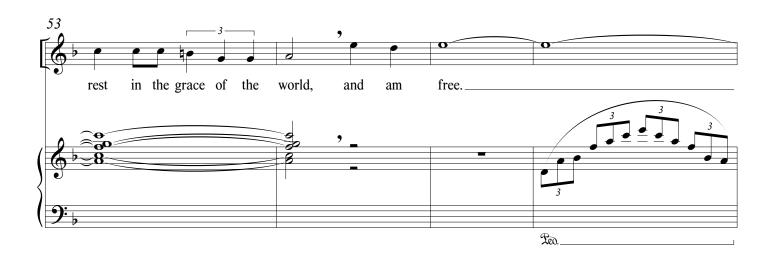
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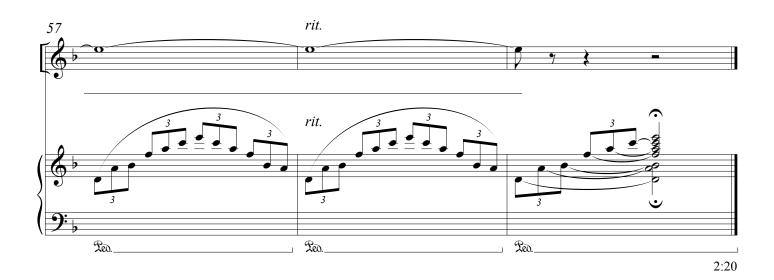












2. Let Us Meet Here Together

"And all the earth shall sing"

Wendell Berry (b. 1934)



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Walker | The Grace of the World | 2. Let Us Meet Here Together



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3. The Timbered Choir

"Great Trees – Apostles of the living light"

Wendell Berry (b. 1934)



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