

Gwyneth Walker

The Marriage of True Minds

**and other Conversations
for Narrator and Violonello**

Duration: 9 minutes

These duets, or *conversations*, were composed specifically for cellist Deborah Black, and her husband, Michel Kabay, a poet, literary scholar and musician. [These friends of the composer live in Barre, VT.] The intent is to provide dramatic material which could display the talents and close collaboration of these performers.

The intermingling of the music and poetry is designed in a flexible, free-form manner which requires sensitive listening, back and forth. The guidelines of musical measures/ barlines are often discarded in favor of responses and commentary between narrator and cellist. Images in the poetry are translated into musical motifs. Lines of narrative are punctuated with cello chords or *tremoli*.

The tone of the *conversations* ranges from the romantic Shakespeare **Sonnet 116** ["Love is an ever-fixed mark that looks on tempests and is never shaken"] to the ridiculous Lewis Carroll poem, **A Strange Wild Song** [in which the narrator essentially loses his mind!] to **Mother of Exiles**, based on an Emma Lazarus text [welcoming the "homeless, tempest-tost" to these shores].

Romance, humor and hope are major ingredients of any **Marriage of True Minds!**

The Marriage of True Minds

and other conversations for Narrator and Violoncello

Gwyneth Walker

1. Sonnet 116

William Shakespeare

with affection and warmth

Violoncello

mf

rit.
rolled pizz.

p

Narrator

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
admit impediments. Love is not love
which alters when it alteration finds,
or bends with the remover to remove.

O no! it is an
ever-fixed mark

arco
quickly, startled

f

p

That looks on tempests
and is never shaken;

It is the star

to every wand'ring bark

tremolo, descending gliss. ad lib.
[Sul D] (to portray "shaken")

f

gliss.

p

(p) gently

Whose worth's unknown,
although his height be taken.

a tempo ♩ = 92

methodically, as if keeping time

pizz.

(same as "shaken")
[Sul D]
f *gliss.* *p* (*p*)

Love's not Time's fool,
though rosy lips and cheeks
within his bending sickel's compass come.

Love alters not with
his brief hours and weeks,

But bears it out even
to the edge of doom.

(as an afterthought)

arco

[stop] *p*

If this be error and upon me prov'd,
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

very darkly
gliss.

gliss.

rit.

pizz.

f *mf* *p*

I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

a tempo
(as the beginning)

arco

mf

rit.

rolled pizz.

p

2. A Strange Wild Song

Lewis Carroll

Read in a fairly even rhythm across each measure approximately aligning with the Cello on the downbeats. [underlined words]

||:

At an entertaining and bouncy tempo ♩ = 120
(swing eighths)
arco, with subtlety and humor

mf

1. He
2. He

thought he saw an El - e - phant that prac -ticed on a fife: He looked a - gain, and found it was a thought he saw a Buf - fa - lo up - on the chim - ney piece: He looked a - gain, and found it was his

pizz. (LH)
+
+
p *mf*

rit. **Slower** [pause] *accel.*

let - ter from his wife. “At length I re - a - lize,” he said, “the bit - ter - ness of life!”
sis - ter’s Hus - band’s niece. “Un - less you leave this house,” he said, “I’ll send for the po - lice!”

rit. **Slower** *accel.*
random, short, high gliss. (enjoying the humor of the narrative) [pause] *roll fingers on body of instrument, as if eagerly listening to the narrative* *descending gliss. tremolo* *arco*

p *p*

The NARRATOR may move to different locations for each verse, perhaps encircling the cellist

3. He
4. He

a tempo

mf

thought he saw a rat - tle - snake that ques - tioned him in Greek: He looked a - gain and found it was the thought he saw a Bank - er's Clerk des - cend - ing from the bus: He looked a - gain and found it was a

pizz. (LH)
mf

Substitute during verse 4 to portray "descending" from the bus

rit. **Slower** [pause] *accel.*
 mid - dle of next week. "The one thing I re - gret," he said, "Is that it can - not speak!"
 Hip - po - pot - a - mus. "If this should stay to dine," he said, "There won't be much for us!"

rit. **Slower** *arco* [high gliss.] [pause] [roll fingers] *arco* *accel.*

p *p*

mf *a tempo* *delicately* **p**

5. He
6. He

pizz. (LH)

thought he saw a kan - ga - roo that worked a cof-fee-mill: He looked a-gain, and found it was a
thought he saw a Coach-and-Four that stood be-side his bed: He looked a-gain, and found it was a

Substitute during verse 6
to portray "Coach-and-Four"

rit. **Slower** [pause] **accel.**

veg - e - ta - ble pill. "Were I to swal - low this," he said, "I should be ver - y ill!"
Bear with - out a Head. "Poor thing," he said, "poor sil - ly thing! It's wait - ing to be fed!"

rit. **Slower** **accel.**

[high gliss.] *arco* [pause] [roll fingers] *arco*

p **p**

mf *a tempo* *gently (fluttering)* **p** **mf**

7. He
8. He

thought he saw an al - ba - tross that flut - tered round the lamp: He looked a - gain, and found it was a thought he saw a Gar - den - Door that o - pened with a key: He looked a - gain, and found it was a

pizz. (LH)

"scratchy" ascending gliss. ad lib.

Substitute during verse 8 to portray "key opening door"

gliss.

rit. **Slower** *accel.*

[pause]

Pen - ny - Post - age stamp. "You'd best be get - ting home," he said, "The nights are ver - y damp!" Dou - ble Rule of Three: "And all it's mys - ter - y," he said, "Is clear as day to me!"

rit. **Slower** *accel.*

[high gliss.] *arco* [pause] [roll fingers] *arco*

p *p* <

a tempo *mf* *f* *with authority*

9. He

thought he saw an Ar - gu - ment that proved he was the Pope: He looked a - gain, and found it was a

p *pizz.* *mf*

rit. **Slower** *accel.*

[pause]

Bar of Mot-tled Soap. “A fact so dread,” he faint-ly said, “Ex - tin - guish -es all hope!”

rit. **Slower** *accel.*

arco [high gliss.] [pause] [roll fingers] *arco*

p *p*

Start quietly and grow in tempo and volume (until “Pope”) as the narrative becomes more fantastical and deranged!

an El - e - phant. . . a Buf - fa - lo. . . a

a tempo

[LH finger tremolo, moving to different places on the body of the instrument] becoming louder, faster and more agitated, to match the narrative

p cresc. poco a poco

becomes more fantastical and deranged

Rat - tle - snake. . . a Bank - er's Clerk. . . a Kan - ga - roo. . . a Coach - and - Four. . . an

(accel.)

(cresc.)

very quickly and loudly *rit.* *(exclaimed to the audience)*

Al - ba - tross. . . a Gar - den - Door. . . THE POPE! This is a very strange wild song!

very quickly and loudly *rit.* [two high gliss.] [keep bow up] *with finality*

f *pizz. (LH)* [lower bow]

3. Mother of Exiles

Emma Lazarus
G. Walker, alt.

Slowly, peacefully, yet with some motion

The first four staves of music are written in bass clef with a 12/8 time signature. The first staff begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The second staff includes a *cresc. poco a poco* instruction. The third staff includes a *(cresc.)* instruction and ends with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The fourth staff includes a *rit.* instruction.

The fifth staff continues the piece with a *(rit.)* instruction. It features two textures: *gentle arp. (arco)* and *rolled pizz.*. The staff concludes with a piano (*p*) dynamic and the instruction *(continue without pause)*.

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
 with conquering limbs astride from land to land;
 Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
 a mighty woman with a torch,

[Cello provides punctuation to narrative]

arco

mf

whose flame is the imprisoned lightning,
 Mother of Exiles
 From her beacon-hand
 glows world-wide welcome;

p \triangleleft *mf*

with warmth

her mild eyes command
 the air-bridged harbor
 that twin cities frame.

spoken with increasing disdain

“Keep, O ancient lands,
 your storied pomp!

Keep your wealth!

[with some insistence and anger, to match the text]

f

Your well-encrusted fame!

Keep all these for yourself!

[a break in mood]

mf \triangleleft *f*

Align reading (underlined words) with downbeat of each measure.

Slowly, peacefully ♩ = 92
 yet with some motion

*rolled pizz.
 gently and soothingly*

quietly, soothingly

Give me your tired, your poor, your

p

