

Gwyneth Walker

Trails and Open Spaces

for String Quartet

1. | Go to the Woods
2. Trail – Winding Path
3. Pond – a Stillness, Creatures
4. Dew on the Cobwebs
5. Gratitude

Trails and Open Spaces

duration: 13:40

Notes

Trails and Open Spaces for String Quartet is a suite of short “excursions” inspired by the hiking trails and open land in the composer’s home town of New Canaan, CT. Various woodland acres, ponds and paths have been set aside for the natural enjoyment of the residents. And this composer has explored them all!

While hiking the trails, words of New England naturalist H. D. Thoreau come to mind. Therefore, selections of Thoreau texts have been included in the musical score for possible reading before the playing of each movement.

I Go to the Woods is “setting out on a walk” music. The style is light and rhythmic, with energy and joy. The Violin then introduces the “Woodland theme.” How gentle and clean are these phrases! The key of A Major (bright) seems well-suited. Intermediate sections are flowing (one may walk past a brook) and very sparse and rhythmic, with the energy of walking in the woods. The “Woodland theme” returns leading to a quiet ending.

Trail – Winding Path features a gentle theme in Viola, leading to triplet patterns, perhaps reflective of the winding path.

Shimmering tremoli, sul tasto, are inspired by the surface of the pond – still, yet glistening. Later the *tremolo* shift to a scratchy *sul ponticello*, as insects are heard. Glissandi reflect the smoothness of the pond’s surface.

“Everywhere there is dew on the cobwebs!” Short glissandi, “wisps of sound,” are the cobwebs. A 3/8 dance follows, as if to suggest the rhythm of exclaiming “Everywhere, everywhere, cobwebs!”

Gratitude is the most extended of the movements, for the composer is truly grateful for the open land. Descending scales (blessings) open the music. Then, Violin 1 enters with the “I am grateful” stepwise theme. The “pure” key of C Major was chosen for this simple expression. A middle section is rhythmic, with tapping on the body of the instruments. This may be heard as branches, or light woodland sounds. The theme returns, now with a counterpoint of “cascading scales of overflowing gratitude” in the Viola. The final ascending run in Violin 1 ends with the stepwise “I am grateful” motive. As the composer has written, “here I can walk in peace. Thank you.”

The Readings

Optional Readings before the playing of each movement

– from the writings of Henry David Thoreau (adapted by Gwyneth Walker)

1. | Go to the Woods

I go to the woods because I wish to live deliberately, to face only the essential facts of life, and see if I cannot learn what it has to teach, and not, when I come to die, discover that I have not lived. I do not wish to live what is not life, living is so dear, nor do I wish to practice resignation, unless it is quite necessary. I want to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life – to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.

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

2. Trail – Winding Path

Remember thy creator in the days of thy youth. Rise free from care before the dawn and seek adventures. Let the noon find thee by other lakes, and the night overtake thee everywhere at home. Grow wild according to thy nature. Let the thunder rumble. Take shelter under the cloud. Enjoy the land, but own it not.

3. Pond – a Stillness, Creatures

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!

4. Dew on the Cobwebs

Everywhere there is dew on the cobwebs, little gossamer veils, or scarfs as big as your hand. They were dropped from the fairy shoulders that danced on the grass last night.

5. Gratitude

words of Gwyneth Walker

(reader or performers may offer their own thanks instead)

I am thankful... for every drop of rain, every passing cloud, every silent tree.
I am thankful... for the morning light, the noonday breeze, the growing calm.
I am thankful... for this open land – for here I can walk in peace. Thank you.

The Composer

Widely performed throughout the country, the music of American composer **Gwyneth Walker** is beloved by performers and audiences alike for its energy, beauty, reverence, drama, and humor. 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 1982 in order to pursue a career as a full-time composer. For nearly 30 years, she lived on a dairy farm in Braintree, Vermont before returning to live in her childhood hometown of New Canaan, Connecticut.

A composer since age two, Gwyneth Walker has always placed great value on writing in a broad array of genres. More than 400 commissioned works for orchestra, chamber ensembles, solo instruments, chorus, and solo voice have been created – all arising from the impetus of performers and collaboration with musicians. Over the decades, she has traveled throughout North America to attend performances of her works and to meet her musician colleagues.

Gwyneth Walker is a proud resident of New England. She was the recipient of the 2000 “Lifetime Achievement Award” from the Vermont Arts Council and the 2018 “Alfred Nash Patterson Lifetime Achievement Award” from Choral Arts New England. In 2020, *her alma mater*, the Hartt School of Music of the University of Hartford, presented her with the Hartt Alumni Award.

Walker’s catalog includes musical works of many sorts: arrangements of traditional folk songs; original music in both vocal and instrumental genres inspired by great American poetry; dramatic works that combine music with readings, acting, and movement; works for student performers of all ages; and large-scale pieces for professional players and ensembles. The music of Gwyneth Walker is published by E.C. Schirmer (choral/vocal/instrumental music) and Lauren Keiser Music (orchestral/instrumental music).

Further information concerning Gwyneth Walker and her works is available at:

www.gwynethwalker.com

Music preparation by:

TUNESMITH MUSIC

PO Box 91435 | Louisville KY 40291 | (502)762-9219

www.tunesmithmusic.com

Trails and Open Spaces

for String Quartet

Gwyneth Walker

1. I Go to the Woods

[May be read aloud before the playing of the first movement]

I go to the woods because I wish to live deliberately, to face only the essential facts of life, and see if I cannot learn what it has to teach, and not, when I come to die, discover that I have not lived. I do not wish to live what is not life, living is so dear; nor do I wish to practice resignation, unless it is quite necessary. I want to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life – to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.

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

– H. D. Thoreau

With the joy of starting a journey (♩ = 126)

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

lightly

p

5

A

"woodland" theme

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

p

9

Vln. 1 *pizz.* *arco*

Vln. 2 *pizz.* *arco*

Vla.

Vlc.

14 **B**

Vln. 1 *mf*

Vln. 2 *mf*

Vla. *mf*

Vlc. *mf*

18 *pizz.* *arco*

Vln. 1 *pizz.* *arco*

Vln. 2 *pizz.* *arco*

Vla.

Vlc.

22 **C**

Vln. 1 *flowing*

Vln. 2 *flowing*

Vla. *pizz.* *flowing*

Vlc. *arco*

2. Trail – Winding Path

Remember thy creator in the days of thy youth. Rise free from care before the dawn and seek adventures. Let the noon find thee by other lakes, and the night overtake thee everywhere at home. Grow wild according to thy nature. Let the thunder rumble. Take shelter under the cloud. Enjoy the land, but own it not.

– H. D. Thoreau

Flowing (♩ = 132), *as a trail in the woods*

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

p

7

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

A

pizz.

pizz.

p gently

pizz.

Detailed description: This is a musical score for measures 7 and 8 of 'The Little Boat'. It features four staves: Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vlc.). The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. Measure 7 contains the following notes: Vln. 1 (quarter notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5), Vln. 2 (quarter notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5), Vla. (whole rest), and Vlc. (quarter notes G3, Bb3, C4, D4). Measure 8 contains: Vln. 1 (quarter notes D4, C4, Bb3, A3), Vln. 2 (quarter notes D4, C4, Bb3, A3), Vla. (quarter notes G3, Bb3), and Vlc. (quarter notes G3, Bb3, C4, D4). A box labeled 'A' is placed above the first staff in measure 8. Performance markings include 'pizz.' (pizzicato) above the first and second staves in measure 8, and 'p gently' (piano, gently) below the third staff in measure 8. A slur connects the two notes in the third staff of measure 8.

21

Vln. 1 *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.*

Vln. 2 *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.*

Vla. *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.*

Vcl. *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.*

27

Vln. 1 *arco*

Vln. 2 *arco*

Vla. *arco*

Vcl. *arco*

33

B

Vln. 1 *mp*

Vln. 2 *mp*

Vla. *mp legato*

Vcl. *mp legato*

40

Vln. 1 *poco cresc.*

Vln. 2 *poco cresc.*

Vla. *poco cresc.*

Vcl. *poco cresc.*

3. Pond – a Stillness, Creatures

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!

– H. D. Thoreau

Peaceful (♩ = 72)
sul tasto

Violin 1
 Violin 2
 Viola
 Violoncello

7
 Vln. 1
 Vln. 2
 Vla.
 Vlc.

13
 Vln. 1
 Vln. 2
 Vla.
 Vlc.

p
sul tasto
shimmering
p
rit.

a tempo (♩. = 72)
ord.

19

Vln. 1 (p)

Vln. 2 (p)

Vla.

Vlc.

23 **A** *Light and playful* (♩. = 72)

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla. ord. (p)

Vlc. ord. (p)

28

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

cresc. poco a poco

cresc. poco a poco

cresc. poco a poco

cresc. poco a poco

33 **B**

Vln. 1 (cresc.) *f*

Vln. 2 (cresc.) *f* pizz. *p*

Vla. (cresc.) *f* pizz. *p*

Vlc. (cresc.) *f* pizz. *p*

4. Dew on the Cobwebs

Everywhere there is dew on the cobwebs, little gossamer veils, or scarfs as big as your hand. They were dropped from the fairy shoulders that danced on the grass last night.

– H. D. Thoreau

“wisps of sound” are light, short, up-bow glissandi, pitches *ad lib.*)

$\text{♩} = 100$
(a playful dialogue)
ascending wisps of sound to suggest “Dew on the Cobwebs”
con sord.

rit.

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

p

(a playful dialogue)
ascending wisps of sound to suggest “Dew on the Cobwebs”
con sord.

p

ascending wisps of sound
con sord.

p

ascending wisps of sound
con sord.

p

5 $\text{♩} = 66$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$)

a single “wisp”

A

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

pizz.

(p)

pizz.

(p)

pizz.

(p)

arco

(p)

arco

(p)

arco

(p)

mf joyous

mf joyous

mf joyous

mf joyous

14

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

23 B

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

(*mf*)

(*mf*)

(*mf*)

32 *as if in the distance*

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

pp

40 C

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

49

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

p playful

p playful

p playful

pizz.

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

5. Gratitude

*I am thankful... for every drop of rain, every passing cloud, every silent tree.
I am thankful... for the morning light, the noonday breeze, the growing calm.
I am thankful... for this open land – for here I can walk in peace. Thank you.*

– Gwyneth Walker
(reader or performers may
offer their own thanks instead)

Moderate tempo (♩ = 120), *flowing*
gently, as a blessing
senza sord.

Violin 1 *p* *senza sord.* *sost.*

Violin 2 *p* *senza sord.* *sost.*

Viola *p* *senza sord.* *sost.*

Violoncello *senza sord.* *sost.* *p*

7

Vln. 1 ** mf cant.*

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

13 **A**

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla. *mf*

Vlc. *mf*

* *gratitude* theme, suggestive of the words “I am thankful”

18 *feathery light*

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

B

mf cant.

21

26 C *Gentle rhythms*

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

pizz.

p

p

p

p

31

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

arco

* *gratitude* theme, suggestive of the words “I am thankful”

89 I

Vln. 1 *p*

Vln. 2 *p* *cresc. poco a poco*

Vla. *p* *cresc. poco a poco*

Vlc. *p* *cresc. poco a poco*

94

Vln. 1 *mp cresc.* *f* *p*

Vln. 2 *(cresc.)* *f* *p*

Vla. *(cresc.)* *f* *p*

Vlc. *(cresc.)* *f* *p*

99

Vln. 1 *f* *p* *f* *p* *(p)*

Vln. 2 *f* *p* *f* *p*

Vla. *f* *p* *f* *p*

Vlc. *f* *p* *f* *p*

104 *rit.*

Vln. 1 *(p)* *pp*

Vln. 2 *(p)* *pp*

Vla. *(p)* *pp*

Vlc. *(p)* *pp*