

musical settings of the poems of Emily Dickinson

for Mezzo-Soprano and Piano

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PROGRAM NOTES

The poetry of Emily Dickinson (1830–1886) is especially appealing due to the wide range of topics, diversity of mood and peculiar imagination of the poet. The writings are reflective, passionate, witty, sensuous, observant and ridiculously humorous. Her heart soars. Her mind pokes fun!

Emily was truly a New Englander. Her poems are understated and compact. Her love of Nature focuses on small things—birds, bees, meadows and a pond.

In creating the musical settings, the composer (herself a New Englander) endeavored to capture the spirit of the poetry, and of the poet, with songs diverse in style, and concise in form. Everything from romance to frogs is explored, briefly.

Great delight is taken in creating musical translations of the colorful imagery: the letters floating off on the breeze ("My Letter to the World"); the shimmering moonlight ("The Moon and the Sea"); a frog croaking in a bog ("The Frog in the Bog"); hopeful birds hopping about ("Hope" with Feathers); the boat of passion riding the waves and then settling into its mooring ("Passion"); the ship's cannon firing in celebration ("Joy"); and the tiniest, lightest gifts of Nature ("All I Have to Bring").

These are the poet's *Letters to the World*. She lived as a recluse, yet her words took flight—traveling the universe as messengers of the soul.

Duration: 14 minutes

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. She now divides her time between her childhood hometown of New Canaan, Connecticut and the musical communities of Sarasota, Florida and Randolph, Vermont.

Gwyneth Walker has been a proud resident of Vermont for many years. She is the recipient of the Year 2000 "Lifetime Achievement Award" from the Vermont Arts Council as well as the 2008 "Athenaeum Award for Achievement in the Arts and Humanities" from the St. Johnsbury (VT) Athenaeum. In 2012, she was elected as a Fellow of the Vermont Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Walker's catalog includes over 300 commissioned works for orchestra, chamber ensembles, chorus, and solo voice. A special interest has been dramatic works that combine music with readings, acting, and movement. The music of Gwyneth Walker is published by E. C. Schirmer (choral and vocal music) and Lauren Keiser Music (orchestral and instrumental music).

Further information concerning Gwyneth Walker and her works is available at: www.gwynethwalker.com

THE POEMS

1. My Letter to the World

This is my letter to the World
That never wrote to Me –
The simple News that Nature told –
With tender Majesty

Her Message is committed To Hands I cannot see – For love of Her – Sweet – countrymen – Judge tenderly – of Me

2. The Moon and the Sea

The Moon is distant from the Sea – And yet, with Amber Hands – She leads Him – docile as a Boy – Along appointed Sands –

He never misses a Degree –
Obedient to Her eye –
He comes just so far – toward the Town –
Just so far – goes away –
Oh, Signor, Thine, the Amber Hand –
And mine – the distant Sea –
Obedient to the least command
Thine eye impose on me –

3. The Frog in the Bog

I'm Nobody! Who are you? Are you – Nobody – Too? Then there's a pair of us! Don't tell! they'd advertise – you know!

How dreary – to be – Somebody! How public – like a Frog – To tell one's name – the livelong June – To an admiring Bog!

4. Hope (with Feathers)

"Hope" is the thing with feathers – That perches in the soul – And sings the tune without the words – And never stops – at all –

And sweetest – in the Gale – is heard – And sore must be the storm – That could abash the little Bird That kept so many warm –

I've heard it in the chillest land – And on the strangest Sea – Yet – never – in Extremity, It asked a crumb – of me.

5. Passion

Wild Nights – Wild Nights! Were I with thee Wild Nights should be Our luxury!

Futile – the Winds –
To a Heart in port –
Done with the Compass –
Done with the Chart!

Rowing in Eden – Ah, but the Sea! Might I but moor –Tonight – In Thee!

6. Joy

'Tis so much joy! 'Tis so much joy! If I should fail, what poverty! And yet, as poor as I, Have ventured all upon a throw! Have gained! Yes! Hesitated so – This side the Victory!

Life is but Life! And Death, but Death! Bliss is, but Bliss, and Breath but Breath! And if indeed I fail, At least, to know the worst, is sweet! Defeat means nothing but Defeat, No drearier, can befall!

And if I gain! Oh Gun at Sea!
Oh Bells, that in the Steeples be!
At first, repeat it slow!
For Heaven is a different thing,
Conjectured, and waked sudden in –
And might extinguish me!

7. All I Have to Bring

It's all I have to bring today—
This, and my heart beside—
This, and my heart, and all the fields—
And all the meadows wide—
Be sure you count — should I forget
Someone the sum could tell —
This, and my heart, and all the Bees
Which in the Clover dwell.

Emily! (from New England)

for Mezzo-Soprano and Piano

Emily Dickinson (1830–1886) G. Walker, alt.

Gwyneth Walker

1. My Letter to the World

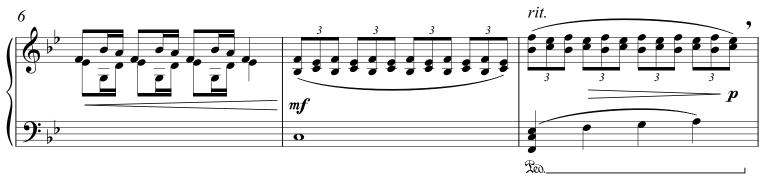
Singer pretends to write a letter (a poem).

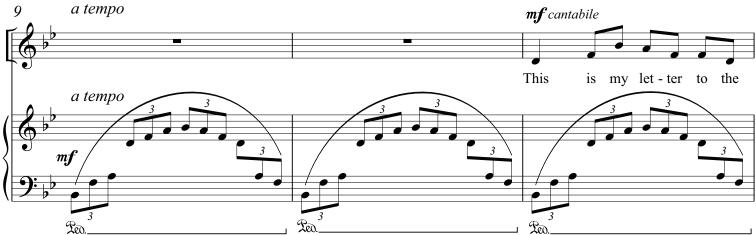
Gently flowing = 92

as a single leaf of paper floating off with a breeze



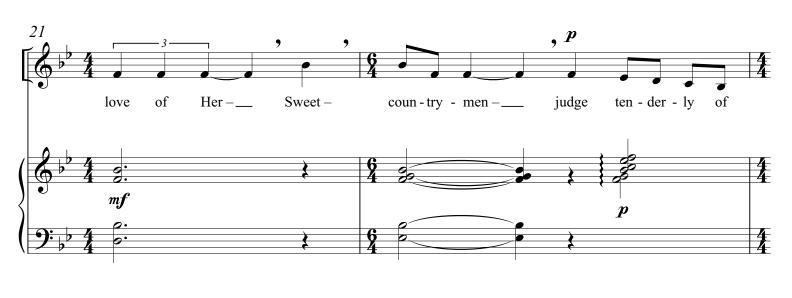


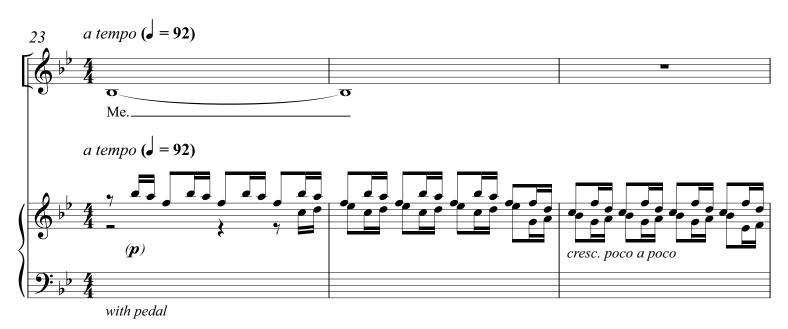


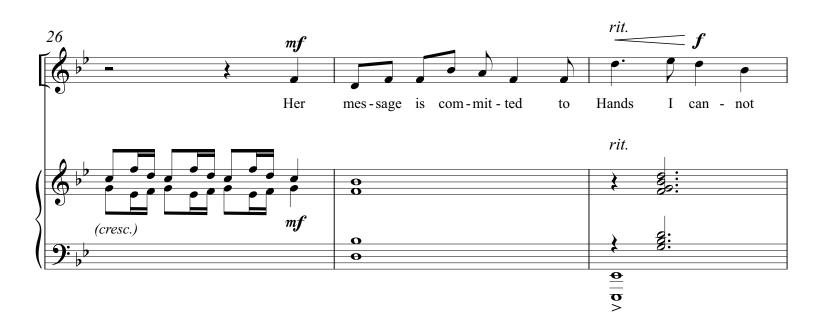


Note setting and format by Gwyneth Walker Music Productions



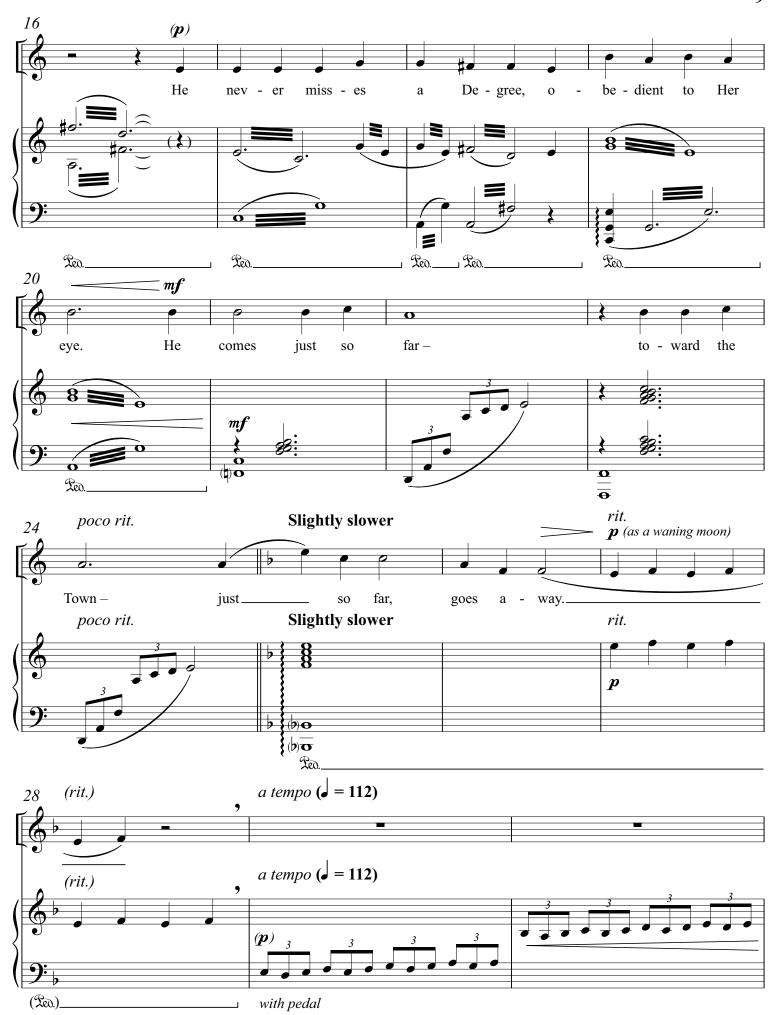






2. The Moon and the Sea





Walker | Emily! (from New England) | 2. The Moon and the Sea



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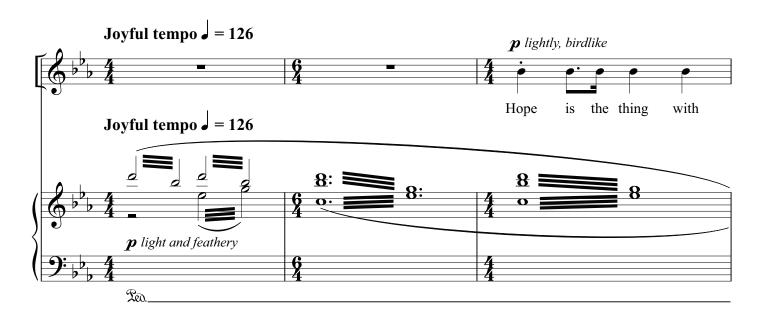
3. The Frog in the Bog

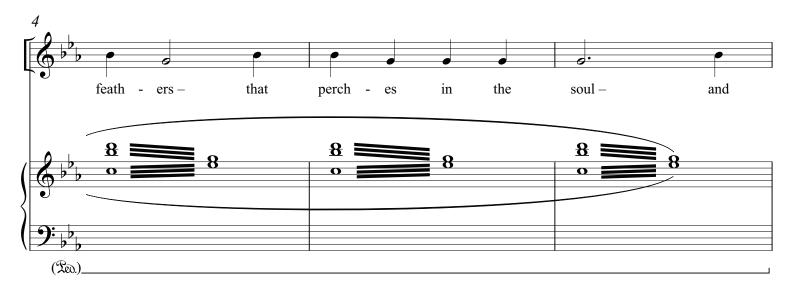


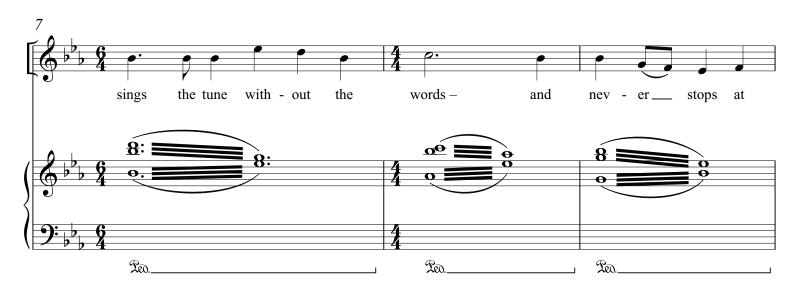


Walker | Emily! (from New England) | 3. The Frog in the Bog

4. Hope (with Feathers)





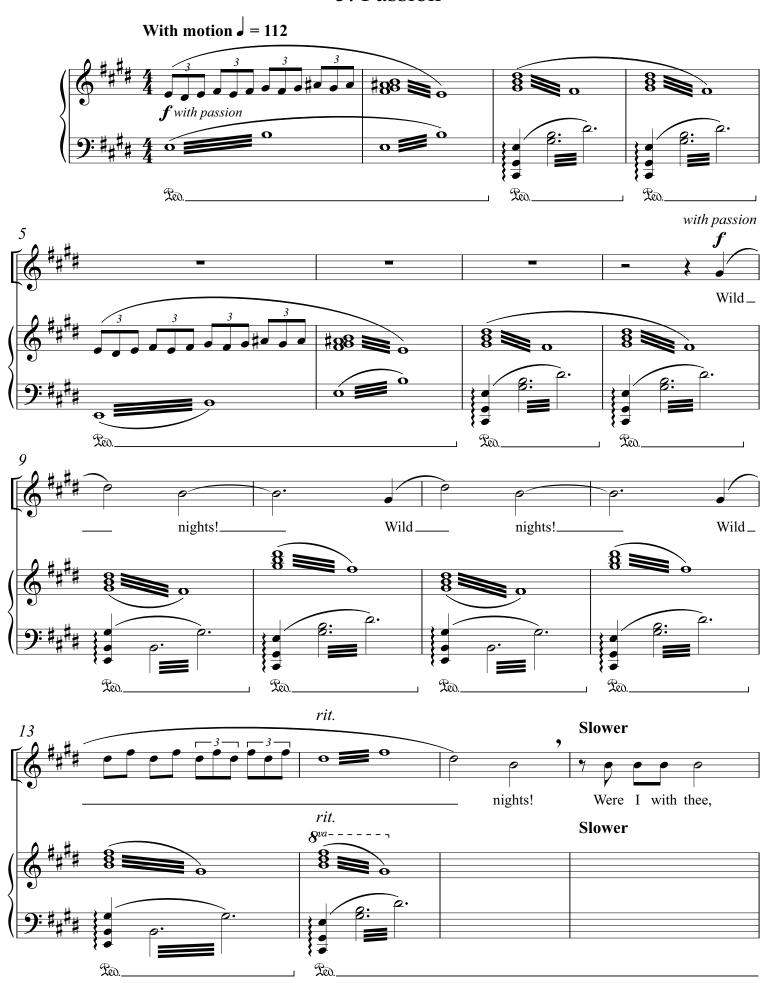






Walker | Emily! (from New England) | 4. Hope (with Feathers)

5. Passion



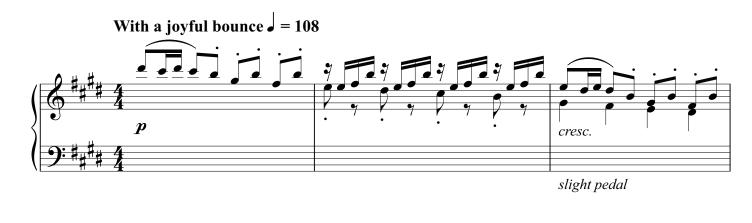
Walker | Emily! (from New England) | 5. Passion

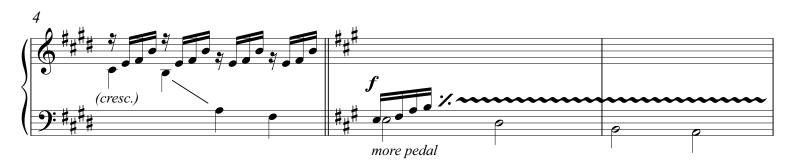


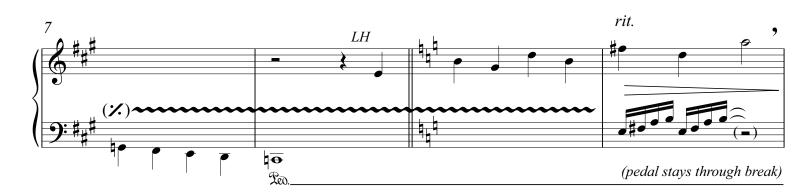


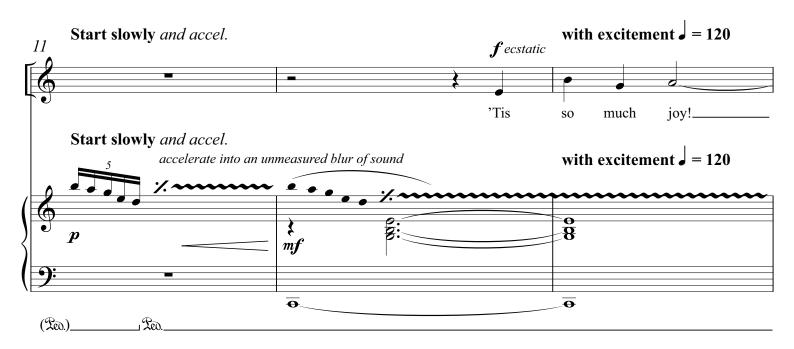
Walker | Emily! (from New England) | 5. Passion

6. Joy











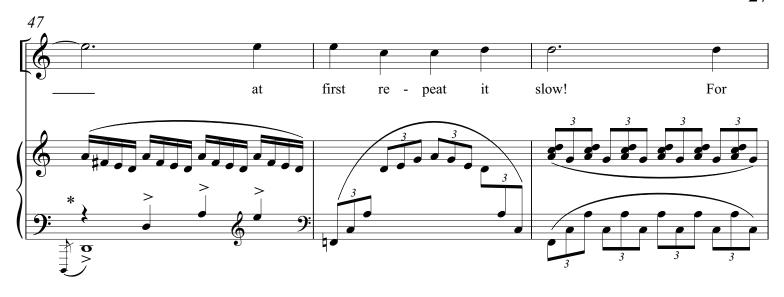
Walker | Emily! (from New England) | 6. Joy

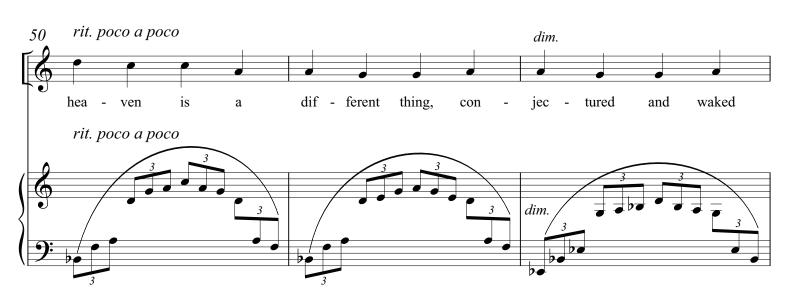


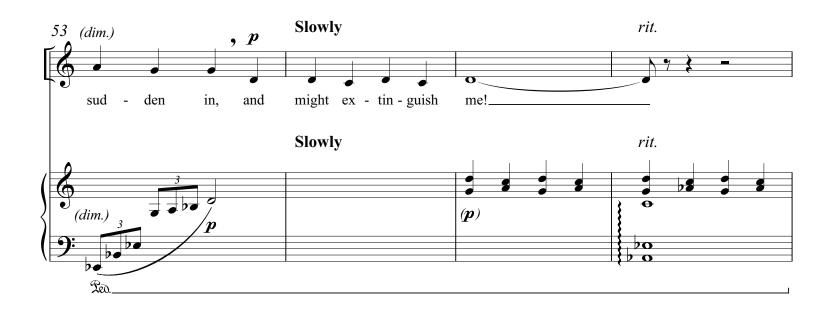


*As cannons fired from a ship at sea

Walker | Emily! (from New England) | 6. Joy







^{*}As cannons fired from a ship at sea

7. All I Have to Bring

Singer pretends to write another letter, as in Song #1.

Lightly J = 108, with moderate energy as a single leaf of paper floating off with a breeze



