Gwyneth Walker

*Songs In Motion*

*Songs for Mezzo-soprano and Piano*

based on the choral set *An Hour to Dance*

musical settings of the poetry of Virginia Hamilton Adair

I. Key Ring
II. Summary by the Pawns
III. The April Lovers
IV. An Hour to Dance
V. Take My Hand
These songs share a common element of motion. Each of the poems focuses on a central image which suggests movement, either subtle or overt. And therefore, the singer and pianist are instructed (and permitted) to bring the poetry to life through gestures and specialized performance techniques.

The opening song, Key Ring, speaks of a child’s wonderment at her grandfather’s key ring, which was swung to and fro. Perhaps, in a child’s imagination, the keys unlocked “mysteries!” The song closes with the jingling of the key chain, as simulated in the piano accompaniment.

Summary by the Pawns is a game of chess, with the pianist exploring the black and white keys, as the opposing players with their dichotomy of colors. Meanwhile, the singer moves in “pawn-like” steps during piano interludes. With a final gesture, the pianist knocks the pawn (singer) off of the chess board!

As in Spring, buds open for The April Lovers. The piano introduction spreads notes apart on the keyboard, as flowers in bloom. Appropriately, the lyrics are “Green is happening.” Flowing/flowering arpeggiated accompaniment surrounds the climactic phrase of “Early lovers never question much.” At the end of the song, “green–green–green–green” buds pop open around the stage, to the singer’s delight!

The fourth song, An Hour to Dance, truly is dance music. “We whirl over the meadows of music” in a light, quick waltz. We whirl past our sadness, beyond time. And, on the topic of time, Alice (in Wonderland) and the Rabbit make a brief appearance, causing us to slow down our waltz. But then the dance resumes. The singer whirls through this song, and leaps for love!

A most unusual and powerful poem forms the basis for the final song, Take My Hand. The motion in this song is that of a passing train, which might be considered a symbol of life moving by. The poet remembers her childhood, when she felt alone and alienated (the train passes by), she accepts that her only home is in her poems, and now she is going blind (the train passes by), the fullness of her life ends beneath the “wheels of Time” (the train passes again, crying in the night).

Train-in-motion activity is present throughout this song. The opening measures involve the pianist tapping across the piano edge as a train passing. Later, as the singer sings “coming to a crossing...” the sideways movement of the train is followed. A train whistle (“oo”) is heard. The final vocal sound is the steam coming from the engine.“Here end my tracks of passion, reason, rhyme.”
The Poems

I. Key Ring

When my grandfather was very old
to one small room confined
he gave me his big bunch of keys to hold.

I asked, “Do they unlock every door there is?
And what would I find inside?”

He answered, “Mysteries and more mysteries.
You can’t tell till you’ve tried.”

Then as I swung the heavy ring around
the keys made a chuckling sound.

II. Summary by the Pawns

First the black square, then a white,
Moved by something out of sight,

We are started with a bound,
Knights and castles all around,
Kings and queens and bishops holy!

After that we go more slowly,
While around us with free gaits
Move the taller potentates.

Still we pawns look straight ahead.

To encourage us it’s said
That pawns who reach the utmost square
Are as good as monarchs there.

Meanwhile pawns, if need be, can
By slanted ways remove a man;

But frequently, before we know
What has got us, off we go!

III. The April Lovers

Green is happening.
Through the sweet expectant chill
Of a northern spring
We have gone without will,

Without fear, without reason,
Trusting to the power
Of a fickle season,
Of a passionate hour,

To mature, to sustain
Till the plan uncovers
In the sun and rain.
Early lovers

Never question much
What is quietly beating
Through the music and the touch
And the mouths meeting.

IV. An Hour to Dance

For a while we whirled
over the meadows of music
our sadness put away in purses
stuffed into old shoes or shawls
the children we never were
from cellars and closets
attics and faded snapshots
came out to leap for love
on the edge of an ocean of tears.

like a royal flotilla
Alice’s menagerie swam by
no tale is endless
the rabbit opened his watch
muttering late, late
time to grow
old
V. Take My Hand, Anna K,

My mother wept in church, Episcopalian;  
Over her far–off town the sun shone bright.  
Her New York City child, I felt an alien.  
Coming to a crossing the train cried in the night.

My only home is in the poems I write  
Who now am exiled by my failing sight.  
Words vanish like a flock of birds in flight.  
Coming to a crossing the train cries in the night.

Here end my tracks of passion, reason, rhyme  
Before the terminal rush and road of light,  
All go together under the wheels of Time.  
Coming to a crossing the train cries in the night.

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The Poet

Virginia Hamilton Adair was born in 1913 in New York City and grew up for the most part in New Jersey. Until her death in 2004, she lived in Claremont, California, and taught for many years at California Polytechnic University at Pomona. Although her early poems were published in magazines such as “The Atlantic Monthly” and “The New Republic,” Ants on the Melon is Virginia Hamilton Adair’s first published collection of poetry.

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.

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

Start slowly, accel. into blur  \( \dot{\,} = \text{ca. 72} \)

\( \text{una corda} \)

When my grandfather was very old, to one small room confined,
he gave me his big bunch of keys to hold, his keys to hold.

Do they unlock every door there is? And what will I find inside?
Mysteries, and more mysteries, and more

You can’t tell *un-til you’ve tried.”

*The word is “till” in the poem.

Walker | Songs In Motion | I. Key Ring
ring around the keys made a chuckling sound.

“Mysteries, and more

accel. poco a poco

mysteries, and more mysteries, and more

(accel.)
mysteries, and more mysteries, and more

(accel.)
Faster

You can't tell until you've tried.

Mysteries.

Faster

Start slowly, accel. into blur

Una corda

Slowly

You can't tell until you've tried.

(una corda)

*to resemble keys jingling on a key ring

Walker | Songs In Motion | I. Key Ring
II. Summary by the Pawns

\[ J = 120, \text{swing eighths (} \frac{3}{8} \text{)} \]

First the black square, then a white, moved by something out of sight.

We are started with a bound,

knights and castles all around, kings and queens and bishops holy!
After that we go more slowly.

Moved by something out of sight.

While around us with free gaits move the taller

Potentates... Still we pawns move straight ahead.

Walker | Songs In Motion | II. Summary by the Pawns
During this 8 measure section (from F to G), the singer should move around the stage in time with the music, backward and forward, side to side, and even diagonally – to simulate a chess game. The singer should stand rigid, facing forward, as a wooden chess pawn.
need be, can by slanted ways remove a man.

frequently, before we know what has got us, off we

go!

frequently, before we know what has got us, off! off! off! off! off! off!

short, quick gliss. (play only if needed)
off we go!

First the black square, then a white
then a white, moved by something out of sight.

(possibly knocking a pawn off of a chess board)

Walker | Songs In Motion | II. Summary by the Pawns
III. The April Lovers

Gently $\frac{\text{d}}{\text{m}} = 80$, as flower buds opening

Green is happening.
Through the sweet expectant chill of a northern spring we have gone without

will, without fear, without reason, trusting to the power of a fickle season,
of a passion-ate, passion-ate hour, to ma-ture, to sus-tain till the

plan un-cov-ers in the sun and rain. Ear-ly lov-ers,

ear-ly lov-ers nev-er

ques-tion nev-er ques-tion nev-er ques-tion much. what is
quie-t-ly beat-ing through the mu-sic and the
touch and the mouths meet-ing.

Ear-ly lov-ers,

ear-ly lov-ers nev-er ques-tion,
early lovers never question never question never question

much

rit.

a tempo \( \frac{\text{h}}{\text{h}} = 80 \)

continue, ad lib

una corda al fine
Singer looks around the stage, perhaps pointing, with delight, to imaginary “buds” as they pop open.

Freely enter (quickly as flower buds opening)

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green, green, green, green, green, green, green, green, green, green, green, green, green, green, green, green,
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green, green, green, green, green, green, green, green, green, green, green, green, green, green, green, green,
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Ah
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Walker | Songs In Motion | III. The April Lovers
IV. An Hour to Dance

Lightly waltzing $\frac{3}{4} = 72$

For a while we whirled over the meadows of mus...
(mf) B

- - sic, our sadness put a -

(p) B

way in purposes, stuffed in to

(old shoes) and shawls.

We whirled over the meadows, we
whirled over the meadows, of

music.

D Slower, more freely

came out to leap for

Walker | Songs In Motion | IV. An Hour to Dance
love, on the edge of an ocean of

tears.

We whirled over the meadows, we

simile

whirled over the meadows, of
Walker | Songs In Motion | IV. An Hour to Dance
Slower, more freely

Like a royal flotilla

Alice's menagerie swam

by.

No tale is endless.

The rabbit opened his watch muttering

Slowly
We came out to leap, we came out to leap,
We came out to leap, came out to leap
for
la la la la la la la love!

* Cue-size note is an ossia.

Walker | Songs In Motion | IV. An Hour to Dance 3'30"
V. Take My Hand

Moderate tempo $\dot{j} = 100$

tap on piano ledge, descending (from right to left), to simulate a train passing by

roll taps at lower (left) end of the ledge

My mother wept in church, Episcopalian;

Over her far-off town the sun shone bright. Her New York City...
child, I felt an alien. Coming to a crossing the

With energy, faster $\dot{j} = 112$

train cried in the night.

With energy, faster $\dot{j} = 112$

(as though watching a train passing in the night)

$p$ almost whispering

com- ing to a cross- ing com- ing to a cross- ing

com- ing to a cross- ing com- ing to a cross- ing
coming to a crossing, crossing, crossing, coming to a crossing, crossing, crossing, crossing, crossing, crossing, crossing, crossing, crossing, crossing, crossing, crossing, crossing, crossing, crossing.

Faster $\text{I} = 120$

com-ing to a cross-ing the train cried in the night.

Faster $\text{I} = 120$

my only home is the poems I write

who now am ex-iled by my fail-ing sight... Words van-ish like a flock of birds in...
42 \( \text{D} \) \( \text{p} \) almost whispering

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>( \text{D} ) (as though watching a train passing in the night)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( \text{p} ) almost whispering</td>
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45 coming to a crossing

47 accel.

Walker | Songs In Motion | V. Take My Hand
(accel.)

coming to a crossing, crossing, crossing,

(accel.)

coming to a crossing

Faster $j = 120$

(cresc.)

Faster $j = 120$

(train cries in the night.

with pedal

(Slower, emphatically)

Here end my tracks of passion, reason, rhyme, before the terminal

(Slower, emphatically)

rush and roar of light. All go together under the

Walker | Songs In Motion | V. Take My Hand
wheels of Time. Coming to a crossing the train cries in the

(_œœ)____

F

Slower, emphatically

rit.

Here end my tracks of

with pedal

62

65

68

72

F

Slower, emphatically

Slower, emphatically

rit.

rit.

rit.

rit.

3

Here end my tracks of

with pedal

passion, reason, rhyme,

before the terminal

rush and roar of light.

All go together under the
wheels of Time.

Coming to a crossing the train cry.

Cry, cry, cry, in the night.

Taps descending on piano ledge

(as though watching a train passing in the night)

Coming to a crossing

almost whispering
Coming to a crossing

Cresc.

Breath ad lib.

As a train whistle

Walker | Songs In Motion | V. Take My Hand
Coming to a crossing, oo_________ coming to a crossing, oo_________

 accel.

Coming to a crossing, oo_________ coming to a crossing, oo, oo, oo_________

 accel.

(accel.) Quickly \( \dot{\}=132 \)

(accel.) Quickly \( \dot{\}=132 \)  \( \frac{8}{4} --- \)

(Same tempo)

in the night, in the night, in the night, in the night,

(Same tempo)
air sound (no pitch), to resemble a train engine letting off steam as it passes by

tap ledge energetically with both hands

4'20"
Total: 16 minutes
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New Canaan, Connecticut