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When Music Sounds - Gwyneth Walker

*SATB Chorus (divisi) and Piano*

E. C.

# When Music Sounds

Gwyneth Walker

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# When Music Sounds

**Duration: 3:15**

*Commissioned by the Cincinnati May Festival Chorus  
Matthew Swanson, conductor*

## Program Notes

*When Music Sounds* is based on the poem “Music” by English poet Walter de la Mare (1873–1956). Although the words were written in a previous century (the poem was published in 1917), many of the sentiments are timeless, speaking to us today.

*When music sounds, gone is the earth I know* is a beautiful expression of the transportive quality of music. When we sing or hear music played, we often leave behind the *real world* of our day-to-day lives. Instead, we enter a lovely realm where *forest trees lift burdened branches, stilled with ecstasies*.

This is a world where fantastic creatures rise out of the water. These are *naiads* (which the composer has renamed *aqua-nymphs*, due to the sonorous nature of this adaptation). The *nymphs* bedazzle us, and then sink to *their dwelling place*, at the bottom of the ocean.

The song opens with a short pattern of notes in the piano right hand marked *music in the distance*. These notes, in this high range, are set apart from normal, daily sounds. This signature musical motif returns throughout the accompaniment, including at the end. The message is that our imagination may be delicate, but it endures.

*The composer wishes to add these special thoughts:*

This music was composed during the COVID pandemic of 2020. This was a stay-at-home time when concerts and concert travels were cancelled. Yet, with composing music as the center of daily thought and activity, the “physical limitations” of a confined life were transcended. Music, *aqua-nymphs*, loveliness, ecstasies, and imagination prevailed!

## Text

When music sounds, gone is the earth I know,  
And all her lovely things even lovelier grow;  
Her flowers in vision flame, her forest trees  
Lift burdened branches, stilled with ecstasies.

When music sounds, out of the water rise  
Naiads whose beauty dims my waking eyes,  
Rapt in strange dreams burns each enchanted face,  
With solemn echoing stirs their dwelling-place.

When music sounds, all that I was I am  
Ere to this haunt of brooding dust I came;  
And from Time’s woods break into distant song  
The swift-winged hours, as I hasten along.

Commissioned by the Cincinnati May Festival Youth Chorus

# When Music Sounds

for SATB Chorus (divisi) and Piano

“Music” by Walter de la Mare (1873–1956)  
publ. 1917, G. Walker, alt.

Gwyneth Walker

**Moderate tempo** ♩ = 112, or faster

*p cantabile*

Soprano  
Alto

*pp* Ah, \_\_\_\_\_ When

Tenor  
Bass

*pp* Ah, \_\_\_\_\_ When

**Moderate tempo** ♩ = 112, or faster  
[“music in the distance” theme]

Piano

*p*

with slight pedal

5 **A**

S  
A

mu - sic sounds, gone is the earth I know, \_\_\_\_\_ and

T  
B

mu - sic sounds, gone is the earth I know, \_\_\_\_\_ and

**A**

17 *p sub.* *mf*

S  
A

stilled with ec - sta - sies. When mu - sic sounds

T  
B

stilled with ec - sta - sies. When mu - sic sounds\_

*p* *mf*

ped.

21

S  
A

gone is the earth I know.

T  
B

gone is the earth I know. Ah,

Bass *p*

25 *mf espr.*

B

When mu - sic sounds, out of the wa - ter rise

*mf*

\*The rests here signify "catching one's breath" when ecstatic in viewing beauty.

29

S *mf* rise... \_\_\_\_\_

A *mf* rise... \_\_\_\_\_ *p gently* A - qua nymphs whose beau - ty dims my

T *mf* \_\_\_\_\_ *p gently* A - - - qua nymphs whose beau - ty dims my

B \_\_\_\_\_ *p gently* A - qua nymphs whose beau - ty dims my

*p gently shimmering*

*And.* \_\_\_\_\_ *simile*

32

S *p* eyes... \_\_\_\_\_ *mf* rapt in fan - ta - sies glows

A \_\_\_\_\_ *mf* glows \_\_\_\_\_

T \_\_\_\_\_

B \_\_\_\_\_

*mf*

*And.* \_\_\_\_\_

59

S the fly - ing hours as I rush a - long.

A the fly - ing hours as I rush a -

T

B

*leg.* *simile*

63

S *mf* **G** When mu - sic sounds, all that I was I am.

A *mf* long, *mf* When mu - sic sounds, all that I was I, all that I was I,

T *mf* When mu - sic sounds, all that I was I, all that I was I,

B *mf* When mu - sic sounds, all that I was I, all that I was I,

**G**

*mf*

83 *mf*

S the heart a -

A *(p) cresc. poco a poco (to J)*  
to a - wake the heart a - gain, the heart a -

T *(cresc.)*  
wake the heart a - gain, the heart a -

B *(cresc.)*  
wake the heart a - gain, the heart a -

*(cresc.)*

87 *f* **J** *unis.*

S gain... The flowers in vis - ion flame, lift

A *f*  
gain... The flowers in vis - ion flame, lift

T *f*  
gain... the for - est trees lift

B *f*  
gain... the for - est trees lift

*f*

*Rec.*