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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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SATB Chorus (*divisi*) and Piano

# 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

Soprano Alto

**p cantabile**

Tenor Bass

**p cantabile**

**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**

8 8 8 8

This musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is for the Soprano (S), the middle for the Alto (A), and the bottom for the Tenor/Bass (T/B). The key signature is G major, indicated by a single sharp sign. Measure 5 begins with eighth-note chords in the bass and sustained notes in the soprano and alto. The lyrics "mu - sic sounds, gone is the earth I know, \_\_\_\_\_ and" are sung. Measure 8 continues with similar patterns, with sustained notes in the bass and eighth-note chords in the upper voices. The section is marked 'A'.

17

S A      *p sub.*      \*      *mf*

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

*p sub.*      \*      *mf*

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

{

Guitar      -      -      -      -

Bass      -      -      -      -

{

Guitar      -      -      -      -

Bass      -      -      -      -

*p*      *mf*

*p*      *mf*

*Réo.*

21

S A      gone is the earth I know.

T B      gone is the earth I know.

Bass      *p*

Ah,

{

Guitar      -      -      -      -

Bass      8      -      -      -

{

Guitar      -      -      -      -

Bass      8      -      -      -

*p*

25

B      *mf* *espr.*

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

{

Guitar      -      -      -      -

Bass      -      -      -      -

{

Guitar      -      -      -      -

Bass      -      -      -      -

\*The rests here signify “catching one’s breath” when ecstatic in viewing beauty.

29

Soprano (S) *mf*: rise... \_\_\_\_\_

Alto (A) *mf*: *p gently* A - qua nymphs whose beau - ty dims my

Tenor (T) *mf*: - A - - - qua nymphs whose beau - ty dims my

Bass (B) *mf*: *p gently* A - qua nymphs whose beau - ty dims my

*p gently shimmering*

*Reo.* \_\_\_\_\_ simile

32

Soprano (S) *p*: eyes... \_\_\_\_\_ rapt in fan - ta - sies glows

Alto (A) *mf*: wa - king eyes, \_\_\_\_\_ glows \_\_\_\_\_

Tenor (T) *p*: wa - king eyes, \_\_\_\_\_

Bass (B) *p*: wa - king eyes, \_\_\_\_\_

**D**

*mf*

*Reo.* \_\_\_\_\_

59

Soprano (S) vocal line:

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

Alto (A) vocal line:

the fly - ing hours as I rush a -

Tenor (T) vocal line:

-

Bass (B) vocal line:

-

Piano (P) harmonic line (bass and treble staves):

Reo. simile

63

Soprano (S) vocal line:

When mu - sic sounds, all that I was I am.

Alto (A) vocal line:

long, When mu - sic sounds, all that I was I, all that I was I,

Tenor (T) vocal line:

When mu - sic sounds, all that I was I, all that I was I,

Bass (B) vocal line:

When mu - sic sounds, all that I was I, all that I was I,

Piano (P) harmonic line (bass and treble staves):

**G**

83

Soprano (S) vocal line:

*(p) cresc. poco a poco (to J)*

Alto (A) vocal line:

*(cresc.)*

Tenor (T) vocal line:

*(cresc.)*

Bass (B) vocal line:

*(cresc.)*

Musical dynamics: *mf*, *p*, *cresc.*, *poco a poco*, *J*, *f*, *unis.*

87

Soprano (S) vocal line:

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

Alto (A) vocal line:

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

Tenor (T) vocal line:

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

Bass (B) vocal line:

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

Musical dynamics: *f*, *unis.*, *J*, *f*

Reed instruments (R) vocal line:

*Red.*