

Commissioned by the Young People's Chorus of New York City
and dedicated to the memory of my mother, Dr. Harriet E. Shatin.

Why the Caged Bird Sings

for SATB Chorus (*divisi*) and Piano

Sympathy

Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872–1906)

Judith Shatin

The musical score is set in 4/4 time with a tempo of approximately 112 beats per minute. It begins with a dynamic marking of *f* (forte). The Alto part starts with a rest followed by the lyrics "I know, I". The Piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The SATB Chorus enters at measure 4, with the Soprano part singing "I know, I know, I" and the Alto part singing "know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I". The piano accompaniment continues with a consistent rhythmic accompaniment.

8

S know, I know, I know, I know what the *mf*

A know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know what the *mf*

T I know, I know, I know, I know what the *f* *mf*

B I know, I know, I know, I know what the *f* *mf*

Pno. *mf*

12

caged bird feels, a - *f* *mp*

caged bird feels, a - *f* *mp*

caged bird, I know, I know, I know, I know, a - *f* *mp*

caged bird, I know, I know, I know, I know, a - *f* *mp*

Pno. *f* *mp*

A

16 *p* **Brightly** *poco accel.*

las, _____ a - las! _____

las, _____ a - las! _____

8 las, _____ a - las! _____

las, _____ a - las! _____

Brightly *poco accel.*

mf

21 (*accel.*)

Pno. *cresc.*

25 ♩ = c. 108

S *f*
When the sun is bright on the up - land slopes;

A *f*
When the sun is bright on the up - land slopes;

T *f* *p*
When the sun is bright on the up - land slopes; When the

B *f* *p*
When the sun is bright on the up - land slopes; When the

Pno. *f* *p*

29

mp
through the spring - ing grass, And the

mp
through the spring - ing grass, And the

mp
wind stirs soft, spring - ing grass,

mp
wind stirs soft, spring - ing grass,

mp

33

mf riv - er flows, *mp* glass, *p* glass;

mf riv - er flows, *mp* stream of glass, *p* glass; -

mf riv - er flows like a stream of glass, *p* glass;

mf riv - er flows like a stream of glass, *p* glass; -

38

mp When the

mp When the

mp When the

mp When the

When the

43 *f*
first bird sings and the first bud opes,
f
first bird sings and the first bud opes,
f
first bird sings and the first bud opes,
f
first bird sings and the first bud opes,
f
mp *cresc.*

48 *mp* *poco accel.*
And the faint per-fume from its chal-ice steals—
mp
And the faint per-fume from its chal-ice steals—
mp
And the faint per-fume from its chal-ice steals—
mp
And the faint per-fume from its chal-ice steals—
mf *mp* *poco accel.*

53 (accel.)

♩ = c. 112

mf

A

T

B

Pno.

mp *mf* *mf*

I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I

I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I

mf

♩ = c. 112

(*accel.*)

57

f

S

A

T

B

Pno.

f *f* *f*

I know, I know, _____

know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, _____

know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I

know I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I

f *f* *f*

61

mp *f* *mp*

what the caged bird feels! I

mp *f* *mp*

what the caged bird feels! I

mp *f* *mp*

8 know what the caged bird feels! I

mp *f* *mp*

know what the caged bird feels! I

mp *f* *mp*

65

mf

know why the caged bird beats his wing, I know why the caged bird beats his wing,

mf

know why the caged bird beats his wing, I know why the caged bird beats his wing,

mf

8 know why the caged bird beats his wing, I know why the caged bird beats his wing,

mf

know why the caged bird beats his wing, I know why the caged bird beats his wing,

mf

68 *f* *ff* *mf*

beats his wing, beats his wing Till its

beats his wing, beats his wing Till its

beats his wing, beats his wing Till its

beats his wing, beats his wing Till its

f *ff* *mf*

72 *mp*

blood is red on the cru - el bars; For he

blood is red on the cru - el bars; For he

blood is red on the cru - el bars; For he

blood is red on the cru - el bars; For he

mp

76

♩ = c. 104

rit. *mf* must fly — back to his perch and cling

mf must fly — back to his perch and cling

mf *p* must fly — back to his perch and cling When he fain would be on the bough a -

mf *p* must fly — back to his perch and cling When he fain would be on the bough a -

♩ = c. 104

mf *p*

80

mp *mf* *p* When he fain would be on the bough a - swing; — — — — — And a

mp *mf* *p* When he fain would be on the bough a - swing; — — — — — And a

mp *mf* swing. When he fain would be on the bough a - swing; — — — — —

mp *mf* *p* swing. When he fain would be on the bough a - swing; — — — — —

85

mp

pain still throbs in the old, old scars And they pulse a - gain with a

mp

pain still throbs in the old old, scars And they pulse a - gain with a

p *mp*

pain still throbs, pain still throbs, pulse a - gain,

p *mp*

pain still throbs pain still throbs pulse a - gain,

mp

88

mf *f*

Urgently ♩ = c. 112

keen - er sting— I know why he beats his wing, why he

mf *f*

keen - er sting— I know why he beats his wing, why he

mf

keen-er sting, keen-er sting—

mf

keen-er sting, keen-er sting—

mf *f*

Urgently ♩ = c. 112

92

E

mp *mf*

beats his wing, why he beats his wing! I know, I know, I know, I know

beats his wing, why he beats his wing! I know, I know, I know, I know

I know, I know, I know, I

I know, I know, I know, I

96

f *mp* *poco rit.* *p*

why the caged bird sings, ah me, ah me,

why the caged bird sings, ah me, ah me,

know why the caged bird sings, ah me, ah me,

know why the caged bird sings, ah me, ah me,

f *mp* *p* *poco rit.*

102 $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 104$
mp *f*

When his wing is bruised and his bo - som sore,— When he beats his bars,

mp *f*

When his wing is bruised and his bo - som sore,— When he beats his bars,

mp *f*

When his wing is bruised and his bo - som sore,— When he beats his bars,

mp *f*

When his wing is bruised and his bo - som sore,— When he beats his bars,

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 104$
mp *f*

106 *ff*

when he beats his bars, and he would be free; _____

ff

when he beats his bars, and he would be free; _____

ff

when he beats his bars, and he would be free; _____

ff

when he beats his bars, and he would be free; _____

ff

111 **F**

mp *mf* *mp*

It is not a car-ol of joy or glee, But a prayer that he sends from his

mp *mf* *mp*

It is not a car-ol of joy or glee, But a prayer that he sends from his

mp *mf* *mp*

It is not a car-ol of joy or glee, But a prayer that he sends from his

mp *mf* *mp*

It is not a car-ol of joy or glee, But a prayer that he sends from his

116

f *mf* *ff*

heart's deep core. But a plea, that up-wards to Heav-en he flings—

f *mf* *ff*

heart's deep core. But a plea, that up-wards to Heav-en he flings—

f *mf* *ff*

heart's deep core. But a plea, that up-wards to Heav-en he flings—

f *mf* *ff*

heart's deep core. But a plea, that up-wards to Heav-en he flings—

G

Urgently ♩ = c. 112

mf

121

I know, I know,
mf

I know, I know,
mf

I know, I know,
mf

I know, I know,
mf

Urgently ♩ = c. 112

f

mf

125

f cresc.

I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know — why the

f cresc.

I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know — why the

f cresc.

I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, — why the

I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know — why the

f cresc.

129 (*cresc.*) *fff*

caged bird sings! _____

caged bird sings! _____

caged bird sings! _____

caged bird sings! _____

(*cresc.*) *fff*

(*cresc.*) *fff*

(*cresc.*) *fff*

(*cresc.*) *fff*

2007
4:45

Program Notes

Why the Caged Bird Sings for SATB chorus and piano is a setting of Paul Laurence Dunbar's poem, *Sympathy*. Dunbar, the son of ex-slaves, gained fame for his writing in many genres, including poetry, plays and novels. Born in 1872, he died in 1906. His poem, *Sympathy*, speaks through poetic metaphor of the suffering of repression. It inspires us to lift up our voices, and to speak out in sympathy. Author Maya Angelou used the line "I know why the caged bird sings" as the title of her autobiographical novel, and also of her own poem of the same name.

Commissioned by the Young People's Chorus of New York City, my setting of Dunbar's poem, titled *Why the Caged Bird Sings*, is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Dr. Harriet E. Shatin, who took joy in all living things.

—Judith Shatin

Judith Shatin (b. 1949)

For biographical information visit:
www.judithshatin.com

Sympathy

I KNOW what the caged bird feels, alas!
When the sun is bright on the upland slopes;
When the wind stirs soft through the springing grass,
And the river flows like a stream of glass;
When the first bird sings and the first bud opes,
And the faint perfume from its chalice steals—
I know what the caged bird feels!

I know why the caged bird beats his wing
Till its blood is red on the cruel bars;
For he must fly back to his perch and cling
When he fain would be on the bough a-swing;
And a pain still throbs in the old, old scars
And they pulse again with a keener sting—
I know why he beats his wing!

I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,
When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore,—
When he beats his bars and he would be free;
It is not a carol of joy or glee,
But a prayer that he sends from his heart's deep core,
But a plea, that upward to Heaven he flings—
I know why the caged bird sings!

—Paul Laurence Dunbar
(1872–1906)