

Please note that not all pages are included. This is purposely done in order to protect our property and the work of our esteemed composers.

If you would like to see this work in its entirety, please order online or call us at 800-647-2117.

TOUCHING *the* INFINITE SKY

Duration: 17:30

JOHN MUIR *and* MRS. CARR

When John Muir was a student at the University of Wisconsin, he was a frequent caller at the house of Dr. Ezra S. Carr. The kindness shown him there, and especially the sympathy which Mrs. Carr, as a botanist and a lover of nature, felt in the young man's interests and aims, led to the formation of a lasting friendship. He regarded Mrs. Carr, indeed, as his "spiritual mother," and his letters to her in later years are the outpourings of a sensitive spirit to one whom he felt thoroughly understood and sympathized with him. These letters are therefore peculiarly revealing of their writer's personality. Most of them were written from the Yosemite Valley, and they give a good notion of the life Muir led there, shepherding, guiding, and tending a sawmill at intervals to earn his daily bread, but devoting his real self to an ardent scientific study of glacial geology and a joyous and reverent communion with Nature.

ABOUT *the* SONGS

The five letters which provide the lyrics for the songs (adapted by the composer) were selected for their range of topics and sentiments. Some portray the wildlife in the mountains ("Glacier Birds..."). Others extol the beauty of the Sierra ("Mountain Glory," "Yosemite Falls"). One expresses the whimsical/temperamental personality of the author ("Ice!"). And the final letter ("Sequoia") speaks reverently of the great trees, in a language both naturalistic and sacred. They are the "greatest light in the woods, the greatest light in the world."

The musical settings, especially in the piano accompaniment, are quite programmatic. Glacier birds scamper up and down the keyboard in tone clusters. "Icy" glissandi float off. The great trees take root in large, block chords, and waterfalls cascade down in scales.

There is personality in the letters. The bond between John Muir and Mrs. Carr (whom he addresses formally) is one of great kinship—a blending of the souls, a "spiritual romance." As he marvels at the beauty of the wilderness, he writes ardently, "I wish that you could see this..." When he learns that Mrs. Carr, the botanist (whose plants suffer from the frost), dislikes ice, he chides her, and creates a "mock argument" over the value of glacial ice.

The songs begin with an ascent into the mountains. They close with the return to the coast, to the magnificent Sequoia trees, where John Muir camps for the night in the company of a squirrel. Charmingly, he writes "Therefore, my Carr, goodnight."

THE LETTERS

1. ASCENT: "GLACIER BIRDS *and* OTHER COMPANIONS"

[YOSEMITE VALLEY, AUGUST 5TH, 1872]

Dear Mrs. Carr:

Your letter telling me to catch my best glacier birds, and come to you and the coast mountains, only makes me the more anxious to see you, and if you cannot come up, I will have to come down, if only for a talk. My birds are flying everywhere, into all mountains and plains, of all climes and times, and some are ducks in the sea, and I scarce know what to do about it. I must see the coast ranges, but I was thinking that I would hide in Yosemite and write; I would hike back among the glaciers of the summits, and be ready to catch any whisper of ice and snow.

You sense all the bends and falls and rapids and cascades of my mountain life—you know that my companions are those who live with me in the same sky, whether in reach of hand or spirit. I am learning to live close to the lives of my friends without ever seeing them. No miles of any measurement can separate your soul from mine.

2. "GLORY *in the* MOUNTAINS"

[YOSEMITE 1871]

"The Spirit" has again led me into the wilderness, and I am once more in the glory of the Yosemite. I am filled with visions of snowy forests of the pine and spruce, and of mountain spires beyond, pearly and half transparent, reaching into heaven blue not purer than themselves.

I wish that you could see the edge of the snow-cloud which hovered, so soothingly, discharging its heaven-begotten snows with such unmistakable gentleness and love, moving from pine to pine, as if bestowing blessings upon each. I wish that you could see this.

In a few hours, we climbed into a glorious storm-cloud. What a harvest of crystal flowers, and the wind song. We could not see before us in the storm, but as I was familiar with the general map of the mountain, we had no difficulty in finding our way.

I went out to watch the coming of the dark—most impressively sublime. Next morning was every way the purest creation I ever beheld!

3. "YOSEMITE FALLS"

[MIDNIGHT, APRIL 3, 1871, YOSEMITE]

O Mrs. Carr, that you could be here to mingle in this night moon glory! I am in the Upper Yosemite Falls, and can hardly calm to write, but, you have been so present in my thought.

In the afternoon, I came up to the mountain, with a blanket and a piece of bread, to spend the night in prayer among the spouts of the Fall. I can only wish again that you would expose your soul to the rays of this heaven.

Silver from the moon lights this glorious creation which we name the Falls, and has laid a double rainbow at its base. O the music that is blessing me now! The grandest notes of the yearly anthem. They echo every fiber of me.

I am going to stop here until morning, and pray a whole blessed night with the Falls and the moon.

4. "ICE!"

[YOSEMITE, DECEMBER 11, 1871]

Ice!

So, you dislike ice!!!

But glaciers, dear friend—ice is only another form of terrestrial love. I am astonished to hear you speak so unbelievably of God's glorious crystal glaciers. "They are only pests," you say, and you think them "wrong in temperature," and they lived in "horrible times," and you don't care to hear about them.

You confuse me. You have taught me here and encouraged me to read the mountains. Now you will not listen. Next summer you will be converted—you will be iced then.

I have been up Nevada to the top of Lyell and found a living glacier; (but you don't want that) and I have been in the canyon above, and I was going to tell you the beauty there; (but it is all ice-born beauty, and too cold for you) and I was going to tell about the making of the South Dome; (but ice did that too) and about the hundred lakes that I found; (but the ice made them, every one) and I had some groves to speak about—groves of surpassing loveliness in new pathless Yosemite; (but they all grew upon glacial drift—and I have nothing to send but what is frozen or freezable).

Glaciers came down from heaven, they were angels with folded wings, white wings of snowy bloom. Locked hand in hand, the little spirits did nobly; they were willing messengers to whom God spoke "well done" from heaven, calling them back to their homes in the sky.

Next summer you will be converted—you will be iced then!

5. DESCENT: "SEQUOIA"

[SQUIRRELVILLE, SEQUOIA COUNTY NUT TIME]

Behold the King in his glory, King Sequoia! Behold! Behold! Behold! Some time ago I left for Sequoia, and have been at his feet; fasting and praying for light. For is he not the greatest light in the woods? And is he not the greatest light in the world? Where are such columns of sunshine brought to earth?

See Sequoia reaching for the skies, every summit modeled in curves, as if pressed into unseen moulds, warm in the amber sun. How truly Godful in stature! Today, King Sequoia bowed down to me down in the grove as I stood gazing. Behold the King in his glory, King Sequoia!

The sun is set and the star candles are lit to show me the way—little Douglas squirrel and I off to bed. Therefore, my Carr, goodnight. You ask, "When are you coming down?" Ask the Lord—Lord Sequoia! Behold!

CONTENTS

Introduction	7
1. Ascent: “Glacier Birds and Other Companions”	10
2. “Glory in the Mountains”	17
3. “Yosemite Falls”	27
4. “Ice!”	34
Introduction to Descent: “Sequoia”	47
5. Descent: “Sequoia”	48

Touching the Infinite Sky

for Tenor Solo, TTBB Chorus, and Piano

John Muir (1838–1914)
 Altered and with words by
 G. Walker

Gwyneth Walker

Introduction

Recited on pitch

p reverently

Tenor 1
 Tenor 2

Touching the infinite sky . . . the glaciers and the summit . . . following the coast ranges . . . the

Bass 1
 Bass 2

Touching the infinite sky . . . the glaciers and the summit . . . following the coast ranges . . . the

4

T1
 T2

cas - cades and the for - est— my moun - tain life . . . my

B1
 B2

cas - cades and the for - est— my moun - tain life . . .

mf

8

T1

soul . . . the in - fi - nite

T2

my soul . . . the in - fi - nite

B1

my soul . . . reach - ing in - to heav - en blue, the in - fi - nite

B2

my soul . . . reach - ing in - to heav - en blue, the in - fi - nite

mf

rit.

Note setting and format by Gwyneth Walker Music Productions

13 *(rit.)* *p*, *pp* *echo* **As before**
Tutti *p* *mp*

T1 8 sky! Ah! The whisper of ice and snow . . . the glory of Yosemite . . .

T2 8 sky! Ah! The whisper of ice and snow . . . the glory of Yosemite . . .

B1 8 sky! Ah! The whisper of ice and snow . . . the glory of Yosemite . . .

B2 8 sky! Ah! The whisper of ice and snow . . . the glory of Yosemite . . .

17 *mf* **With motion**

T1 8 the purest creation I ever beheld . . . the night moon glory . . .

T2 8 the purest creation I ever beheld . . . the night moon glory . . .

B1 8 the purest creation I ever beheld . . . the night moon glory . . . King Se -

B2 8 the purest creation I ever beheld . . . the night moon glory . . . King Se - quo - ia,

[cluster of light!]

20 *f* *p* *f*

T1 King Se - quo - ia ... the greatest light in the world! The rays,

T2 *unis. f* *div. p* *f* *unis.*
King Se - quo - ia ... the greatest light in the world! The rays,

B1 quo - ia, King Se - quo - ia ... the greatest light in the world! The rays, the

B2 King Se - quo - ia ... the greatest light in the world! the

24 *rit.* *p with affection* *(a few voices)* *pp echo* *attacca*

T1 of hea - ven... I wish that you could see this ... I wish that you could see this ...

T2 of hea - ven... I wish that you could see this ... I wish that you could see this ...

B1 rays of hea - ven... I wish that you could see this ... I wish that you could see this ...

B2 rays of hea - ven... I wish that you could see this ... I wish that you could see this ...

1. Ascent: "Glacier Birds and Other Companions"

[Yosemite Valley, August 5th, 1872]

Soloist steps forward to sing

Tempo ad libitum

*playfully,
as birds hopping across a glacier
ascending black-note clusters*

*faster, scurrying
higher*

*just a few birds
very high*

p

Tenor Solo *mf quasi recitative*

Dear Mrs. Carr: Your letter telling me to catch my best

rapidly, blurred, a glacier in the distance

pp barely noticed

And.

glacier birds, and come to you and the coast mountains, only makes me the more

p as a little bird in the distance

And.

anxious to see you, and if you can not come up, I _____

stop

(Pedal off)

2 **Moderate tempo** ♩ = 108 *rit.* **Slower**, *p*

T *mf* will have to come down, if on - ly for a talk.

Moderate tempo ♩ = 108 *rit.* **Slower**

5 **Tempo I** (♩ = 108) *mf ecstatic*

T My birds are fly - ing ev - 'ry - where, -

B1 *p (hum in background)* Hmm,

B2

Tempo I (♩ = 108) *gentle tremoli, as birds in flight*

p *mf*

Rec. Rec. Rec.

8

T in - to all moun - tains and plains, of all climes and times, -

T1 *p* Ah,

T2

B1 Ah,

B2

mf

Rec. *simile*

12

T *f*
and some are ducks in the sea, and I

T1 *mf* *f*
and some are ducks in the sea,

T2 *mf* *f*
and some are ducks in the sea,

B1 *mf* *f*
and some are ducks in the sea,

B2 *mf* *f*
and some are ducks in the sea,

15

T *f* **Grandly**
scarce know what to do a-bout it. I

T1 *f*
Glo - ry! Glo - ry!

T2 *f*
Glo - ry! Glo - ry!

B1 *f*
Glo - ry! Glo - ry!

B2 *f*
Glo - ry! Glo - ry!

Grandly

f

8vb-
Ped.

8vb-
Ped.

2. "Glory in the Mountains" [Yosemite, 1871]

With motion ♩ = 96, but not rushed
(the grandeur of the mountains)

p
with much pedal

(the mountain top)

8^{va}

3

Detailed description: This block shows the piano introduction in 4/4 time. The right hand plays a series of chords and eighth notes, while the left hand plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment. A dynamic marking of *p* is present. The instruction 'with much pedal' is written below the staff. A trill-like figure in the right hand is marked with '8^{va}' and a '3' below it, with an arrow pointing to it from the text '(the mountain top)' above.

[Soloist may rest]

mf with reverence for the wilderness

4

T 8

"The Spir - it" has led me in - to the wil - der - ness, _____

3

T1

unis. *mf* with reverence for the wilderness

T2 8

"The Spir - it" has led me in - to the wil - der - ness, _____

3

B1

unis. *mf* with reverence for the wilderness

B2 8

"The Spir - it" has led me in - to the wil - der - ness, _____

3

Detailed description: This block contains the vocal and piano accompaniment for the first line of the song. It features four vocal staves (T, T1, T2, B1, B2) and a piano accompaniment. The vocal parts are marked with a dynamic of *mf* and the instruction 'with reverence for the wilderness'. The lyrics are: "The Spir - it" has led me in - to the wil - der - ness, followed by a long line. The piano accompaniment continues with the same eighth-note accompaniment as in the introduction. A dynamic marking of *mf* is present. A trill-like figure in the piano part is marked with '8^{va}' and a '3' below it.

7 [or Soloist may rest]

T
8 — and I am once more in the glo - ry of Yo - sem - i - te.

T1
T2
8 — and I am once more in the glo - ry of Yo - sem - i - te.

B1
B2
— and I am once more in the glo - ry of Yo - sem - i - te.

10 [Soloist joins in]

T
8 — I am filled with vis - ions of snow - y for - ests of the

T1
T2
8 — I am filled with vis - ions of snow - y for - ests of the

B1
B2
— I am filled with vis - ions of snow - y for - ests of the

13 *poco rit.* **Slightly slower** *f*

T 8 pine and spruce, and of moun - tain spires, pearl - y and half trans -

T1 8 pine and spruce, Ah,

T2 8 pine and spruce, Ah,

B1 8 pine and spruce, Ah,

B2 8 pine and spruce, Ah,

poco rit. **Slightly slower** *f*

16 *mf* *accel.*

T 8 par - ent, reach - ing in - to heav - en blue ___ not ___ pur - er than them -

T1 8 reach - ing in - to heav - en blue ___ not ___ pur - er than them -

T2 8 reach - ing in - to heav - en blue ___ not ___ pur - er than them -

B1 8 reach - ing in - to heav - en blue ___ not ___ pur - er than them -

B2 8 reach - ing in - to heav - en blue ___ not ___ pur - er than them -

mf *accel.*

3. "Yosemite Falls"

[Midnight, April 3, 1871, Yosemite]

Flowing ♩ = 108

unis. p

T1
T2
B1
B2

Flowing ♩ = 108
as a waterfall

Ah,

mf

Ped.

Ped.

4

mf tenderly

T
T1
T2
B1
B2

O Mrs. Carr, that

Ah,

Ah,

(Ped.)

T

you could be here to mingle in this night moon glo -

f

(Ped.)

10

T 8 *mf*
ry! I am in the

T1
T2 Ah,

B1
B2 Ah,

(Leo.)

13

T 8
Up-per Yo-sem-i-te Falls, and can hard-ly calm my-self to

T1
T2 Ah, Ah,

B1
B2 Ah, Ah,

(b) (b) (b)

Leo. Leo. Leo.

poco rit. **Slower, quasi recitative**

16 *p*

T
8
write, but you have been so pres - ent in my thought.

T1
T2

B1
B2

poco rit. **Slower, quasi recitative**

ped.

p

Tempo I (♩ = 108)
mf with excitement and anticipation

19

T
8
In the af - ter - noon, I came up to the moun - tain,

T1
T2
(*p*)
Ah,

B1
B2

Tempo I (♩ = 108)
gentle tremolo, with excitement and anticipation

mf

(*ped.*)

4. "Ice!"

[Yosemite, December 11, 1871]

(in which the author has a disagreement with Mrs. Carr!)

Quickly, as brittle ice

a black-note cluster followed by a white-note (upward) glissando

(ascending)

f

higher

ped.

(Chorus may shiver!)

black-note cluster to white-note cluster tremolo

very high

p — *ff*

ped.

Singer (may wish to step forward to the audience)
spoken loudly, with disgust and disbelief
(tempered with affection), directed at Mrs. Carr.

Ice! So you dislike ice!!!

(Chorus shivers again)

Singer resumes normal stage position

2

Quickly ♩ = 120, ice crystals

p

slight pedal

mf conversationally

But gla - ciers, dear friend—

mf *p*

ped.

8

T

ice is on - ly an - oth - er form of ter - res - trial love.

mf *p*

(Ped.)

11

T

I am as - ton - ished to hear you speak so un - be - liev - a - bly of

rit. *mf* *rit.*

(Ped.)

14

T

God's glo - rious crys - tal gla - ciers...

Slower **Tempo I (♩ = 120)** *rit.*

Slower **Tempo I (♩ = 120)** *rit.*

p

(Ped.) *slight pedal, as before*

18 **Slower** *f* with disgust

T "They are on - ly pests," you say, and you think them

Chorus claps (as if swatting a fly)

T1

T2

B1

B2

Slower

f

20

T "wrong in tem - pera - ture," and they lived in "hor - ri - ble times,"

(for rehearsal only)

f

3

3

8^{vb} -

Reo.

23 (as an aside) **Tempo I** (♩ = 120) *mf* curtly, with disdain *p*

T and you don't care to hear about them. You con -

Tempo I (♩ = 120) *p* gentle tremolo, to portray confusion

3

3

8^{vb} -

Reo.

Reo.

Introduction

to Descent: "Sequoia"

At a stately tempo ♩ = 92

f triumphantly

T1
T2

Be - hold the King in his glo - ry! Be - hold the King Se -

f triumphantly

B1
B2

Be - hold the King in his glo - ry! Be - hold the King Se -

At a stately tempo ♩ = 92

f

8^{va}

8^{vb}

5

T1
T2

quo - ia! Ma - jes - tic! The King of Heav - en! The

B1
B2

quo - ia! Ma - jes - tic! The King of Heav - en! The

9

T1
T2

great - est light in the world! the

poco *mf*

B1

great - est light in the world! Reach - ing in - to Heav - en blue, the

poco *mf*

B2

the world! Reach - ing in - to Heav - en blue, the

13 *rit.* *p*, *a tempo* (♩ = 92) *f*

T1 in - fi - nite sky! Be - hold!

T2 in - fi - nite sky! Be - hold!

B1 in - fi - nite sky! Be - hold!

B2 in - fi - nite sky! Be - hold!

continue directly into song 5 without break

:45

5. Descent: "Sequoia"
 [Squirrelville, Sequoia County Nut Time]

Grandly ♩ = 92

T

T1 *f* triumphantly
 Se - quo - ia! Se - quo - ia!

T2 *f* triumphantly
 Se - quo - ia! Se - quo - ia!

B1 *f* triumphantly
 Se - quo - ia! Se - quo - ia!

B2 *f* triumphantly
 Se - quo - ia! Se - quo - ia!

Grandly ♩ = 92
the majestic Sequoia trees

5

f

T Be - hold the King in his glo - ry, King Se -

T1 Se - quo - ia! Se - quo - ia!

T2 Se - quo - ia! Se - quo - ia!

B1 Se - quo - ia! Se - quo - ia!

B2 Se - quo - ia! Se - quo - ia!

9

T quo - ia! Be - hold! Be - hold! Be -

T1 Se - quo - ia! Se - quo - ia! Be - hold! Be - hold!

T2 Se - quo - ia! Se - quo - ia! Be - hold! Be - hold!

B1 Se - quo - ia! Se - quo - ia! Be - hold! Be - hold!

B2 Se - quo - ia! Se - quo - ia! Be - hold! Be - hold!