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Commissioned by The Arkansas Chamber Singers John Yarrington, Music Director

*Premiered by
The Arkansas Chamber Singers with the Quapaw String Quartet
Little Rock, Arkansas, March 19, 1999*

Duration: 30 minutes

The Golden Harp

Invocation

reading: *"Still thou pourest, and still there is room"*

song: *"I am here to sing thee songs"*

Beloved

reading: *"My heart wanders wailing with the restless wind"*

song: *"If thou speakest not"*

Prayer

reading: *"Let my country awake"*

song: *"This is my prayer"*

Light, My Light

reading: *"Thy joy in me is so full"*

song: *"Light, my light"*

(Solo song interspersed: *"O beloved of my heart"*)

Thou Art

song: *"Thou art the sky"*

My Tears of Sorrow

song: *"Mother, I shall weave a chain of pearls... "*

reading: *"On the day when death will knock on thy door"*

song: *"Death, my death, come and whisper to me"*

Salutation

poem: *"I boasted among men that I had known you"*

song: *"In one salutation to thee, my God"*

Notes

The Golden Harp is the result of a commission from the Arkansas Chamber Singers for a work for chorus and string quartet. The Chamber Singers wished to collaborate with the Quapaw Quartet (string quartet from the Arkansas Symphony) in presenting music written especially for the two ensembles.

The poetry of Rabindranath Tagore was suggested to the composer by a member of the Arkansas Chamber Singers. And indeed this poetry is well-suited to settings for chorus and strings. The poems are gentle and lyrical. The language is readily comprehensible and very singable. There are frequent images of floating and soaring—images congenial to the string idiom, as the bows float across the strings, or musical lines soar into the high ranges of the instruments.

The opening song, *I Am Here to Sing Thee Songs*, contains the phrase “When in the morning air the golden harp is tuned.” This beautiful image of a stringed instrument captured the composer's imagination, and led to the title of the work.

All of the poetry selected for *The Golden Harp* is found in Tagore's collection, *Gitanjali*, published in 1913. The poems span the course of the poet's life. And the form of *The Golden Harp* mirrors this pattern. The work is divided into seven sections: triumphant at the beginning and close (#1 *Invocation* and #7 *Salutation*); more introspective in the interior sections (#2 *Beloved*, #3 *Prayer*, #5 *Thou Art* and #6 *My Tears of Sorrow*); and rising to a celebratory middle section (#4 *Light, My Light*).

The message of *The Golden Harp* is spiritual, and yet very close to the center of human emotions. Tagore's poetry extols the beauty of the divine and the beauty of the soul within—the beloved as creator, the beloved as lover. “Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well.”

Rabindranath Tagore

Born in 1861 to an influential Bengali family, Rabindranath Tagore achieved fame as a novelist, playwright, poet, painter, lecturer, politician and composer. In 1913 he was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature, the first non-European to achieve such an honor. He died in 1941.

Gwyneth Walker

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

To be read before Song #1

Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life.

This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales, and hast breathed through it melodies eternally new.

At the immortal touch of thy hands my little heart loses its limits in joy and gives birth to utterance ineffable.

Thy infinite gifts come to me only on these very small hands of mine. Ages pass, and still thou pourest, and still there is room to fill.

The Golden Harp

for SATB Chorus and Piano,
or String Orchestra, or String Quartet

Rabindranath Tagore

Gwyneth Walker

I. I Am Here to Sing Thee Songs

♩ = 112 With a gentle lilt

Piano

mf lightly, rhythmically

5

S

A

T

B

f I am

f I am

f I am

f I am

sim.

poco *And. ad lib.*

A

here to sing thee songs. I am here to sing thee

here to sing thee songs. I am here to sing thee

here to sing thee songs. I am here to sing thee

here to sing thee songs. I am here to sing thee

A

rit. - - - - -

songs. In this hall of thine I have a

songs. In this hall of thine I have a

songs. In this hall of thine I have a

songs. In this hall of thine I have a

rit. - - - - -

To be read before Song #2

Clouds heap upon clouds and it darkens. Ah, love, why dost thou let me wait outside at the door all alone?

In the busy moments of the noontide work I am with the crowd, but on this dark day it is only for thee that I hope.

If thou showest me not thy face, if thou leavest me wholly aside, I know not how I am to pass these long, rainy hours.

I keep gazing on the far away gloom of the sky, and my heart wanders wailing with the restless wind.

II. If Thou Speakest Not

Slowly, quasi recitativo

S

A *p*
If thou speak - est not I will fill my heart with thy

T *p*
If thou speak - est not I will fill my heart with thy

B *p*
If thou speak - est not I will fill my heart with thy

Slowly, quasi recitativo

p
una corda

4

A *p*
If thou speak - est not

si - - - lence. If thou speak - est not

si - - - lence. If thou speak - est not

si - - - lence. If thou speak - est not

A *p*

7

I will fill my heart with thy si - lence and en - - - dure it.

I will fill my heart with thy si - lence and en - - - dure it.

I will fill my heart with thy si - lence and en - - - dure it.

I will fill my heart with thy si - lence and en - - - dure it.

9

B

p

p

I will keep still and wait like the night with star - ry

p

I will keep still and wait like the night with star - ry

p

I will keep still and wait like the night with star - ry

p

I will keep still and wait like the night with star - ry

p

I will keep still and wait like the night with star - ry

B

To be read before Song #3

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;

Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments
by narrow domestic walls;

Where words come out from the depth of truth;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into
the dreary desert sand of dead habit;

Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening
thought and action –

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

III. This is My Prayer

Unrushed ♩ = 96

p gently

S This is my prayer to thee, my Lord.

A *p gently* This is my prayer to thee, my Lord.

T *p gently* This is my prayer to thee, my Lord.

B *p gently* This is my prayer to thee, my Lord.

Unrushed ♩ = 96

p

cue notes for rehearsal only

A Slightly faster ♩ = 108

4

mp This is my prayer to thee, my Lord. Give me the strength

mp This is my prayer to thee, my Lord. Give me the strength

p This is my prayer to thee, my Lord. Ah

p This is my prayer to thee, my Lord. Ah

A Slightly faster ♩ = 108

mp

7

light - ly to bear my joys and sor - rows. Ah

light - ly to bear my joys and sor - rows. Ah

Give me the strength to

Give me the strength to

10

accel. — — **B** ♩ = 120

p ————— *mf*

Ah, Give me the strength

p ————— *mf*

Ah, Give me the strength

make my love fruit - ful in ser - vice. Ah,

make my love fruit - ful in ser - vice. Ah,

accel. — — **B** ♩ = 120

p ————— *mf* ————— *p*

To be read before Song #4

Thus it is that thy joy in me is so full. Thus it is that thou hast come down to me. O thou lord of all heavens, where would be thy love if I were not?

Thou hast taken me as thy partner of all this wealth. In my heart is the endless play of thy delight. In my life thy will is ever taking shape.

And for this, thou who art the King of kings hast decked thyself in beauty to captivate my heart. And for this thy love loses itself in the love of thy lover, and there art thou seen in the perfect union of two.

IV. Light, My Light

With energy ♩ = 144

p

4

sim.

8

A

S *p* ————— *mp* *p* ————— *mp*

Light, my light, the world fill-ing light, the

A *p* ————— *mp* *p* —————

Light, my light, the world fill-ing light,

T

B

A

(p)

12

p

eye kiss - ing light,

mp

p

heart - - - sweet - en - ing light

p

Light,

16

B

mp

p *mp*

p *mp*

Light, my light, my light, my light, my

Light, my light, my light, my light, my

my light, my light, my light, my light, my light, my

B

mp *p*

V. Thou Art the Sky

With gentle motion ♩ = 108

p cantabile *mp*

S Thou art the sky and Thou art the nest as

p cantabile *mp*

A Thou art the sky and Thou art the nest as

T

B

With gentle motion ♩ = 108

cue notes for rehearsal only

p *p* *mp*

4

p *mp*

well. Thou art the sky and Thou art the nest as

p *mp*

well. Thou art the sky and Thou art the nest as

p cantabile *mp* *mp*

Thou art the sky and Thou art the nest as well.

p cantabile *mp* *mp*

Thou art the sky and Thou art the nest as well.

p *mp* *p* *mp*

8 *rit.* - - - - - A ♩ = 88

mf well. O thou beau - - ti - - ful

mf well. O thou beau - - ti - - ful

mp Thou art the sky and Thou art the nest, thou beau - - ti - - ful

mf Thou art the sky and Thou art the nest, thou beau - - ti - - ful

rit. - - - - - A ♩ = 88

p *mp* *mf*

11 *mp* there in the nest it is thy love that en - clos - es the soul with

p mm that en - clos - es the soul with

p mm that en - clos - es the soul with

p mm that en - clos - es the soul with

rit. - - - - -

mp *p*

VI. Mother, I Shall Weave a Chain of Pearls...

With gentle motion ♩ = 88

First system of piano accompaniment. Treble clef is empty. Bass clef contains a melodic line starting on G4. Dynamics include *p* and *sim.*. Performance instructions include *red.* and *una corda through* with a box containing the letter 'C'. A fermata is placed over the final note of the system.

Second system of piano accompaniment. Treble clef is empty. Bass clef continues the melodic line. Dynamics include *p*. A fermata is placed over the final note of the system.

Solo Bar. Bass clef. Measure 8 starts with a whole rest. Measure 9 has a half note G4 with dynamics *p* and *mp*. Measure 10 has a half note G4. A box containing the letter 'A' is positioned above the staff.

Moth - - - - - er,

A

Third system of piano accompaniment. Treble clef is empty. Bass clef continues the melodic line. Dynamics include *p* and *non cresc.*. Performance instructions include *red.*. A fermata is placed over the final note of the system.

11 *mp*

Solo Bar. I will weave a chain of pearls for thy

p

sed. 6

14 *p*

Solo Bar. neck with my tears of sor - - - - row.

p *non cresc.* (*p*)

sed. *sed.* *sed.*

17 *p*

Solo Bar. Moth - - - -

p

6 *sim.* *6*

To be read before Song #7

On the day when death will knock at thy door what wilt thou offer to him?

Oh, I will set before my guest the full vessel of my life – I will never let him go with empty hands.

All the sweet vintage of all my autumn days and summer nights, all the earnings and gleanings of my busy life will I place before him at the close of my days when death will knock at my door.

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VII. Death, My Death, Come and Whisper to Me

Slowly ♩ = 66

Musical notation for measures 1-2. Treble clef, key signature of two flats, 6/4 time signature. The right hand features a melodic line with slurs and a sixteenth-note triplet in measure 2. The left hand has a whole rest in measure 1 and a whole note in measure 2. Dynamics include *mf espr.* and a *6* above the final note.

poco *rit.* *ad lib.*
sempre una corda

accel. - - - - -

Musical notation for measures 3-4. Treble clef, key signature of two flats, 4/4 time signature. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and sixteenth-note triplets in measures 3 and 4. The left hand has whole notes. Dynamics include *6* above the triplets.

♩ = 80

Musical notation for measures 5-6. Treble clef, key signature of two flats, 4/4 time signature. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and sixteenth-note triplets in measures 5 and 6. The left hand has whole notes. Dynamics include *6* above the triplets and *sim.* at the end.

rit. - - - - -

♩ = 66

Musical notation for measures 7-8. Treble clef, key signature of two flats, 6/4 time signature. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs. The left hand has chords. Dynamics include *p* and *rit.*

rit.

rit.

9 **A** (♩ = 66) *Quasi recitativo*

p

S O thou the last ful - fil - ment of life, Death, my death, come and

A O thou the last ful - fil - ment of life, Death, my death, come and

T O thou the last ful - fil - ment of life, Death, my death, come and

B O thou the last ful - fil - ment of life, Death, my death, come and

A (♩ = 66)

11

whis - per to me! Day af - ter day have I kept watch for thee; for

whis - per to me! Day af - ter day have I kept watch for thee; for

whis - per to me! Day af - ter day have I kept watch for thee; for

whis - per to me! Day af - ter day have I kept watch for thee; for

mf *p*

To be read before Song #8

I boasted among men that I had known you. They see your pictures in all works of mine. They come and ask me, “Who is he?” I know not how to answer them. I say, “Indeed, I cannot tell.” They blame me and they go away in scorn. And you sit there smiling.

I put my tales of you into lasting songs. The secret gushes out from my heart. They come and ask me, “Tell me all your meanings.” I know not how to answer them. I say, “Ah, who knows what they mean!” They smile and go away in utter scorn. And you sit there smiling.

VIII. In One Salutation to Thee

Triumphantly ♩ = 100

S
A
T
B

In one sal-u-ta-tion to

(roll chord on the beat)

Triumphantly ♩ = 100

In one sal-u-ta-tion to

4

thee, my God, let all my sen - ses spread out and touch the

thee, my God, let all my sen - ses spread out and touch the

poco *Ad. ad lib.*

accel. - - - - - ♩ = 120

7

world at thy feet.

world at thy feet.

world at thy feet.

world at thy feet.

accel. - - - - - ♩ = 120

10

A (♩ = 120)

mf

Like a rain-cloud of Ju - ly hung — low with its bur - den of

mf

Like a rain-cloud of Ju - ly hung — low with its bur - den of

A (♩ = 120)