

Clarinet

Gwyneth Walker

The Laughter of Women
and other songs

based on the poetry of Lisel Mueller

for Soprano, Clarinet and Piano

This version for Soprano, Clarinet and Piano is a transcription of the original scoring for Soprano, Violin and Piano, commissioned by Donne e Doni Chamber Soloists, Walla Walla, WA – premiered February 4, 2001. A version for Mezzo Soprano, Clarinet and Piano also exists.

Program Notes

*The texts for **The Laughter of Women** are found in Alive Together, the 1997 Pulitzer Prize-winning collection of poems by Lisel Mueller. This poetry encompasses a broad spectrum of mood: reverent, irreverent (!), witty, poignant, independent, reflective and triumphant.*

The musical interpretations aim to explore the imagery evoked by the poetry. For example, in the opening song, “The Laughter of Women,” the jagged patterns introduced in the clarinet might be suggestive of laughter. And the glissandi which occur mid-way through the song are associated with the text of “wipes the spectacles of the old,” to be heard, perhaps, as “wiping” motives. The image of fire in this song is suggested by swirling patterns in the piano, later adopted by the clarinet. And daylight shines through, perhaps, in the clarinet high arpeggios..

In general, the voice presents the lyrics, the piano offers the underpinning, and the clarinet is the primary image-translator, offering motives which endeavor to reflect the words. The piano occasionally joins in this activity as well, “scampering” up the keyboard when the words “they laugh as if they were young again” are sung. The listener might therefore enjoy detecting possible correlations between the poetry (as expressed by the singer) and the musical accompaniment.

The poems presented in this work were selected in chronological order from Alive Together. Certainly, “The Laughter of Women,” with its energy and triumph, appeals as a strong opening selection. And, “There Are Mornings” closes with its own form of triumph – the transcendent beauty of when “the sky opens and pours itself into me.”

Notes About the Composer

Dr. Gwyneth Walker 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, Walker resigned from academic employment in 1982 in order to pursue a career as a full-time composer. She now lives on a dairy farm in Braintree, Vermont.

Walker’s catalog includes over 120 commissioned works for orchestra, band, chorus and chamber ensembles. The music of Gwyneth Walker is published by E.C. Schirmer of Boston (choral/vocal music) and MMB Music of St. Louis (orchestral/instrumental music).

Gwyneth Walker is a proud resident of Vermont. She is the recipient of the Year 2000 “Lifetime Achievement Award” from the Vermont Arts Council. In addition, she has been awarded the Orchestral Commission from the Vermont High School All-State Festival for a new work to celebrate the 75th season of the Festival – 2002.

Clarinet in B \flat

The Laughter of Women

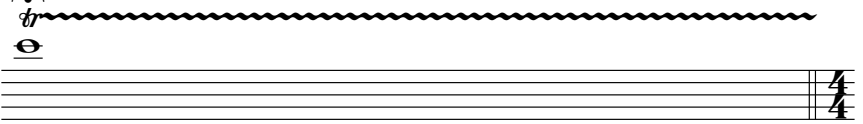
Gwyneth Walker

Soprano speaks:



The laughter of women sets fire
to the Halls of Injustice
and the false evidence burns
to a beautiful white lightness

barely audible

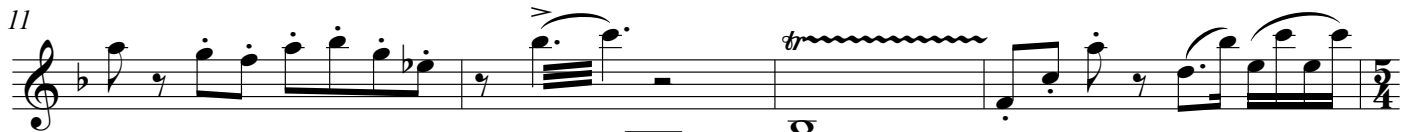


pp

With energy $\text{♩} = 108$



f joyfully



rit.

B slower

Soprano



ev - i - dence burns to a beau - ti - ful white



accel.

a tempo

p

f



rit.

p

f



p

p

Clarinet

31 *accel.* *a tempo*

p *f*

35 *tr*

p *f*

39 **D**

p *f* *p*

43

p *f*

46 **E**

p *f* *f*

49 (as if wiping off eyeglasses)

p *f*

52 *tr*

p *f*

56 **F** *slower* Soprano

f *p*

fects them with a hap-py flu, and they

59 *accel.* *a tempo*

p *f*

laugh as if they were young a-gain,

63 *tr*

p *f*

67 *rit.* **G** slower *pp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

70 *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* Soprano 3 *rit.* *sf*

72 rec - on - ciles two un - friend - ly shores like flares that sig - nal the

75 **H** **Triumphantly** ♩ = 72 start slowly *f* *sf* *acc.* ♩ = 72 3 3 3 3

81 *f* *rit.* 3 3

84 3 3 *f* *rit.* 3

86 **I** twice as quickly ♩ = 144 *(f)* *p* *f*

89

92

94 6 6 6 6 6 6

Interlude I — Tacet

Things

Soprano *mf* What

Clarinet *mf* **Sprightly** ♩ = 144

5 **A** hap - pened is we grew lone - - - ly, liv - ing a - mong the

p

9 things, lone - - - ly, so we gave the

p

mf

13 **B** clock a face, the chair a back, the

mf *f*

p *mp* *p* *mf* *p*

Clarinet

17

ta - ble, four stout legs, which will

f *p*

21

nev - er suf - fer fa - - tigue.

key click

p *f* *p*

25

We fit - ted our shoes with tongues as smooth as our

p *f* *p*

29

own and hung tongues in - side bells so we could lis - ten to

mf *p* *mf* *p* *p*

34

their e - mo - tion - al lan - - - - guage.____

poco accel. - - - - -

39

D gracefully, slightly faster ♩ = 176

and be - - - cause_ we loved

mf

45

grace - - - - - ful pro - - - - - files

mf *p*

51

the pit - cher re - - - ceived a

E

mf *p*

57

lip, the bot - tle_____ a long slen - - - der

mf *p*

63

neck._____ E - ven what was be - yond us____

F Slower ♩ = 138

rit. *mf* *p*

68 *gradual rit.* was re - cast in our im - age; we gave the coun - try a heart, $\text{♩} = 120$

72 the storm an eye, the cave a mouth.

76 *rit.* so we could pass in - to safe - ty, the

79 coun - try a heart, the storm an eye, the

83 cave a mouth *rit.* so we could pass in - to safe - ty. *a tempo*

87 *(non rit.)*

Interlude II — Tacet

[Piano pedal stays until midway through reading]

TEARS

(read by Mezzo Soprano)

*The first woman who ever wept
was appalled at what stung
her eyes and ran down her cheeks.
Saltwater. Seawater.
How was it possible?
Hadn't she and the man
spent many days moving
upland to where the grass
flourished, where the stream
quenched their thirst with sweet water?
How could she have carried these sea drops
as if they were precious seeds;
where could she have stowed them?
She looked at the watchful gazelles
and the heavy-lidded frogs;
she looked at the glass-eyed birds
and nervous, black-eyed mice.
None of them wept, not even the fish
that dripped in her hands when she caught them.
Not even the man. Only she
carried the sea inside her body.*

FUGITIVE (Optional reading by Pianist or Clarinetist)

9

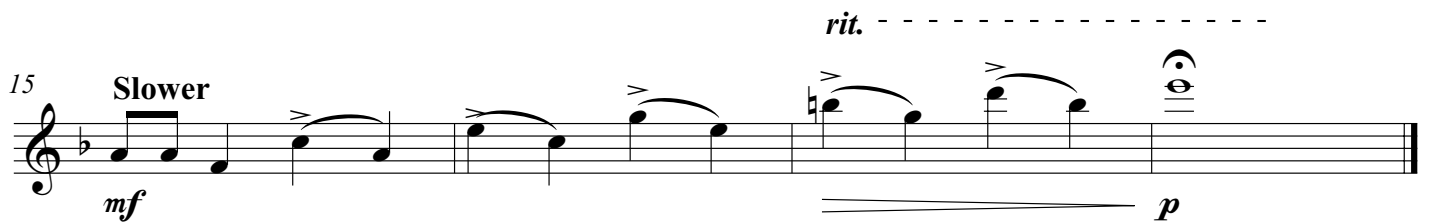
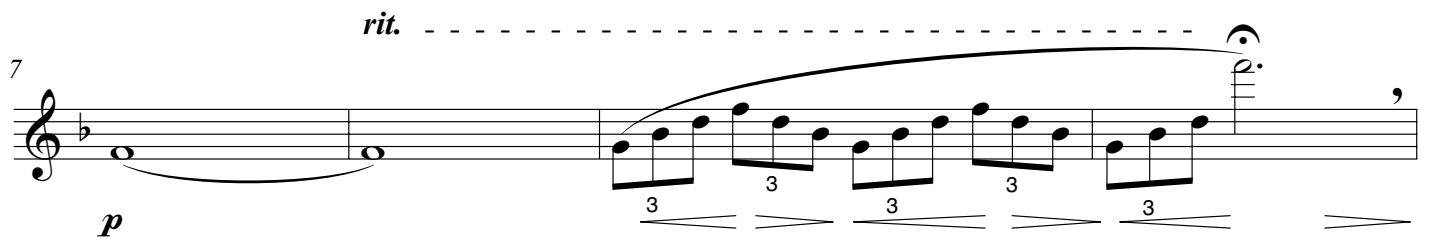
*My life is running away with me;
the two of us are in cahoots.
I hold still while it paints
dark circles under my eyes,
streaks my hair gray, stuffs pillows
under my dress. In each new room
the mirror reassures me
I'll not be recognized.
I'm learning to travel light,
like the juice in the power line.
My baggage, swallowed by memory,
weighs almost nothing. No one suspects
its value. When they knock on my door,
badges flashing, I open up:
I don't match their description.
"Wrong room," they say, and apologize.
My life in the corner winks
and wipes off my fingerprints.*

SOMETIMES, WHEN THE LIGHT (Optional reading by Pianist or Clarinetist)

*Sometimes, when the light strikes at odd angles
and pulls you back into childhood
and you are passing a crumbling mansion
completely hidden behind old willows
or an empty convent guarded by hemlocks
and giant firs standing hip to hip,
you know again that behind that wall,
under the uncut hair of the willows
something secret is going on,
so marvelous and dangerous
that if you crawled through and saw,
you would die, or be happy forever.*

Interlude III

Sprightly ♩ = c. 132



Naming the Animals

♩ = 72 *as a rocking motion*

Piano

5

11

16

21

A

27

33

Clarinet

accel.

39

45 **B** $\text{♩} = 80$

50

55

61 **C** $\text{♩} = 80$

67

74

80

87 **Free Measure**
Soprano: Before he could put on the knowledge of who she was, with her small hands

88 **E** $\text{♩} = 72$

93

There are Mornings

$\text{♩} = 126$ (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6)

pp

7 *mf* **A**

11

15

18 *p*

21 **B** continue two-measure pattern

Soprano: Some mornings in summer I step outside and the sky opens and pours itself into me as if I were a saint about to die.

22 **C** ($\text{♩} = 126$) *mf*

26

29 **D** *p*

33 **3**

40

45 **E**

49

54 **F**

58 *poco rit.* slightly slower, quasi recitative

64 *rit.* **G** Slowly

67 *accel.* a tempo (♩ = 126)

H Quickly ♩ = 144

72

sfp ————— *mf* *p*

76

(*p*) ————— *mf* *p* ————— *mf*

80

mf ————— *f* *mf* ————— *f*

84

87

p subito ————— *f*

92

mf ————— *p*

97

100

ff