

Gwyneth Walker

My Father Lived His Soul
for SATB Chorus unaccompanied

Based on the poem
my father moved through dooms of love
by E. E. Cummings

My Father Lived His Soul

duration 5:45

my father moved through dooms of love is an extended, complex poem by E. E. Cummings. It contains some of his most beautiful writing. The poet speaks of his father as a loving participant in the natural world. The father is remembered as *singing each morning out of each night...or for he could feel the mountains grow*.

The reader can almost see the father as a tree: *septembering arms of year extend, with strength: his shoulders marched against the dark*.

The poet leads the reader to share a child's view of the father: *and every child was sure that spring danced when she heard my father sing...*

The challenge in creating a musical setting of this poem is to sustain the steady, regular flow of the stanzas, while drawing attention to the most special lines and images. A nearly constant tempo throughout leads each verse into the next. The tonality remains the same. Pitches rise and fall with the lyrics. Dynamics ebb and flow with the intensity of the message.

Although there are several *forte* phrases within the song, the strongest climax comes with the closing words:

*because my Father lived his soul
love is the whole and more than all*

This description of the father matches the composer's father, John Baldwin Walker, a naturalist with poetry in his soul.



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.

Gwyneth Walker has been a proud resident of Vermont for many years. She is the recipient of the Year 2000 "Lifetime Achievement Award" from the Vermont Arts Council as well as the 2008 "Athenaeum Award for Achievement in the Arts and Humanities" from the St. Johnsbury (VT) Athenaeum. In 2012, she was elected as a Fellow of the Vermont Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Walker's catalog includes over 300 commissioned works for orchestra, chamber ensembles, chorus, and solo voice. A special interest has been dramatic works that combine music with readings, acting, and movement. The music of Gwyneth Walker is published by E. C. Schirmer (choral and vocal music) and Lauren Keiser Music (orchestral and instrumental music).

Further information concerning Gwyneth Walker and her works is available at: www.gwynethwalker.com

my father moved through dooms of love

- 1 my father moved through dooms of love
through sames of am through haves of give,
singing each morning out of each night
my father moved through depths of height
- 2 this motionless forgetful where
turned at his glance to shining here;
that if (so timid air is firm)
under his eyes would stir and squirm
- 3 newly as from unburied which
floats the first who, his april touch
drove sleeping selves to swarm their fates
woke dreamers to their ghostly roots
- 4 and should some why completely weep
my father's fingers brought her sleep:
vainly no smallest voice might cry
for he could feel the mountains grow.
- 5 Lifting the valleys of the sea
my father moved through griefs of joy;
praising a forehead called the moon
singing desire into begin
- 6 joy was his song and joy so pure
a heart of star by him could steer
and pure so now and now so yes
the wrists of twilight would rejoice
- 7 keen as midsummer's keen beyond
conceiving mind of sun will stand,
so strictly (over utmost him
so hugely) stood my father's dream
- 8 his flesh was flesh his blood was blood:
no hungry man but wished him food;
no cripple wouldn't creep one mile
uphill to only see him smile.
- 9 Scorning the Pomp of must and shall
my father moved through dooms of feel;
his anger was as right as rain
his pity was as green as grain
- 10 septembering arms of year extend
less humbly wealth to foe and friend
than he to foolish and to wise
offered immeasurable is
- 11 proudly and (by octobering flame
beckoned) as earth will downward climb,
so naked for immortal work
his shoulders marched against the dark
- 12 his sorrow was as true as bread:
no liar looked him in the head;
if every friend became his foe
he'd laugh and build a world with snow.
- 13 My father moved through theys of we,
singing each new leaf out of each tree
(and every child was sure that spring
danced when she heard my father sing)
- 14 then let men kill which cannot share,
let blood and flesh be mud and mire,
scheming imagine, passion willed,
freedom a drug that's bought and sold
- 15 giving to steal and cruel kind,
a heart to fear, to doubt a mind,
to differ a disease of same,
conform the pinnacle of am
- 16 though dull were all we taste as bright,
bitter all utterly things sweet,
maggoty minus and dumb death
all we inherit, all bequeath
- 17 and nothing quite so least as truth
—i say though hate were why men breathe—
because my Father lived his soul
love is the whole and more than all

— E. E. Cummings

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* ①

♩ = 60 constant tempo (with some flexibility)
 [unless otherwise instructed]

Soprano

Alto *p tenderly*
 my fath - er moved through dooms of love through

Tenor *p tenderly*
 my fath - er... my fath - er... my fath - er...

Bass *p tenderly*
 my fath - er... my fath - er... my fath - er...

Piano *p tenderly*

♩ = 60 constant tempo (with some flexibility) * ①
 [unless otherwise instructed]

*The circled numbers refer to the stanzas of the poem.

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3

S

A

T

B

8

sames of am through haves of give, _____ sing - ing each morn - ing out of each night _____ my

my fath - er . . . my fath - er . . .

my fath - er . . . my fath - er . . .

5

S

A

T

B

8

p *tenderly*

this mo - tion - less for - get - ful where

fath - er moved through depths of height _____ this mo - tion - less for - get - ful where

my fath - er . . . my fath - er . . .

my fath - er . . . my fath - er . . .

2

7 *poco cresc.*

S turned at his glance to shin - ing here; that if (so tim - id air is firm)

A turned at his glance to shin - ing here; that if (so tim - id air is firm)

T _____ my fath - er... _____ my fath - er... _____

B _____ my fath - er... _____ my fath - er... _____

poco cresc.

9 *(cresc.)* **mf** **3**

S un - der his eyes would stir and squirm new - ly as from un - bur - ied_ which

A *(cresc.)* un - der his eyes would stir and squirm new - ly as from un - bur - ied which

T *(cresc.)* _____ my fath - er... new - ly as from un - bur - ied which

B *(cresc.)* *unis.* **mf** my fath - er... new - ly as from un - bur - ied_ which

(cresc.) **mf** **3**

11 *unis.*

S floats the first who, his apr - il touch drove sleep - ing selves to swarm their fates

A floats the first who, his apr - il touch drove sleep - ing selves to swarm their fates woke

T *unis.*
8 floats the first who, his apr - il touch drove sleep - ing selves to swarm their fates woke

B floats the first who, his apr - il touch *unis.* their fates woke

13

S 4 my

A *unis.*, *p*
dream - ers to their ghost - ly roots and should some why com - plete - ly weep my

T *unis.*, *p*
8 dream - ers to their ghost - ly roots and should some why com - plete - ly weep my

B *p*
dream - ers to the ghost - ly roots and should... my fath - er...

p 4

15

S fath - er's fin - gers brought her sleep: vain - ly no small - est voice might cry for

A fath - er's fin - gers brought her sleep: vain - ly no small - est voice might cry for

T fath - er's fin - gers brought her sleep: vain - ly no small - est voice might cry for

B my fath - er... vain - ly no small - est voice might cry for

mf

17

S he could feel the moun - tains grow. lift - ing the val - leys of the sea my

A he could feel the moun - tains grow. lift - ing the val - leys of the sea my

T he could feel the moun - tains grow. ah

B he could feel the moun - tains grow.

f

p

19

S
fath - er moved through griefs of joy; prais - ing a fore - head called the moon *p*

A
fath - er moved through griefs of joy; prais - ing a fore - head called the moon

T
8 of joy and prais - ing a fore - head called the moon *mf*

B
the moon and *mf*

21

S
, *mf animated* joy was his song and joy so pure a *mf* joy!

A
p sing - ing de - sire in - to be - gin , *mf animated* joy was his song and joy so pure a

T
p sing - ing de - sire in - to be - gin , *unis. mf animated* joy was his song and joy so pure a

B
p sing - ing de - sire in - to be - gin , *mf animated* joy was his song and joy so pure a

23

S by him could steer and pure so now and now so yes

A heart of star by him could steer and pure so now and now so yes the

T heart and pure so now and now so yes the

B heart of star by him could steer and pure so now and now so yes

25

S *unis.* would re - joice keen as mid - sum - mer's keen be - yond con -

A wrists of twi - light would re - joice keen as mid - sum - mer's keen be - yond con -

T wrists of twi - light would re - joice keen as mid - sum - mer's keen be - yond con -

B would re - joice keen as mid - sum - mer's keen be - yond con -

7 *(mf)*

27

S
ceiv - ing mind of sun will stand, so strict - ly (o - ver ut - most him so

A
ceiv - ing mind of sun will stand, so strict - ly (o - ver ut - most him so

T
ceiv - ing mind of sun will stand, so strict - ly (o - ver ut - most him so

B
ceiv - ing mind of sun will stand, so strict - ly (o - ver ut - most him so

29

rit.

S
huge - ly) stood my fath - er's dream , **8** *a tempo, with growing intensity* *unis. p* no

A
huge - ly) stood my fath - er's dream *unis. p* his flesh was flesh his blood was blood: no

T
huge - ly) stood my fath - er's dream *unis. p* his flesh was flesh his blood was blood: no

B
huge - ly) stood my fath - er's dream , *unis. p* no

rit.

8 *a tempo, with growing intensity*

p

31 *mf*

S hun - gry man but wished him food; no crip - ple would - n't creep one mile

A hun - gry man but wished him food; no crip - ple would - n't creep one mile

T *mf* hun - gry man but wished him food; no crip - ple would - n't creep one mile up - hill to on - ly see him smile.

B *mf* hun - gry man but wished him food; up - hill to on - ly see him smile.

⑨ *f* 34 *mf* *unis.*

S Scorn - ing the Pomp of must and shall my fath - er moved through dooms of feel; his

A *f* Scorn - ing the Pomp of must and shall my fath - er moved through dooms of feel; his *mf*

T *unis. f* Scorn - ing the Pomp of must and shall my fath - er moved through dooms of feel; his *mf*

B *f* *unis.* Scorn - ing the Pomp of must and shall my fath - er moved through dooms of feel; *mf*

⑨ *f* *mf*

36

S an - ger was as right as rain *p* sep - *p smoothly*

A an - ger was as right as rain *p* sep - *p smoothly*

T an - ger was as right as rain *p* as green as grain *p gently*

B his pit - y was as green as grain *p gently*

⑩ 38

S tem - ber - ing arms of year ex - tend less hum - bly wealth to foe and friend than

A tem - ber - ing arms of year ex - tend less hum - bly wealth to foe and friend than

T ah *unis.* ex - tend less hum - bly... *smoothly* to friend than

B ah *smoothly* ex - tend less hum - bly... *smoothly* to friend than *unis.*

⑩

40 *mf*

S he to fool - ish and to wise ah _____ *(mf)*

A he to fool - ish and to wise ah _____ *unis. (mf)*

T *mf*
8 he to fool - ish wise... of - fered im - meas - ur - a - ble is

B *mf*
8 he to fool - ish wise... of - fered im - meas - ur - a - ble is

mf

⑪ 42 *mf* >

S proud - ly and (by oct - o - ber - ing flame _____) beck - oned) as earth will down - ward climb, so *unis.*

A proud - ly and (by oct - o - ber - ing flame _____) beck - oned) as earth will down - ward climb, so

T *(mf)* >
8 proud - ly and (by oct - o - ber - ing flame _____) so *unis.*

B *(mf)* >
8 proud - ly and (by oct - o - ber - ing flame _____)

⑪

44

S na - ked for im - mor - tal work his *p*

A na - ked for im - mor - tal work his shoul - ders marched a - gainst the dark his *p*

T na - ked for im - mor - tal work his shoul - ders marched a - gainst the dark

B his shoul - ders marched a - gainst the dark

⑫ 46

S sor - row was as true as bread: no li - ar looked him in the head; if

A sor - row was as true as bread: no li - ar looked him in the head; if *unis. p*

T *mm* My fath - er... my fath - er...

B *mm* My fath - er... my fath - er...

⑫

48

S *mf* *with delight* *f*
 ev - 'ry friend be - came his foe he'd laugh and build a world with snow My

A *mf* *with delight* *f*
 ev - 'ry friend be - came his foe he'd laugh and build a world with snow My

T *mf* *with delight* *f*
 his foe he'd laugh and build a world with snow My

B *unis.* *mf* *with delight* *f*
 his foe he'd laugh and build a world with snow My

⑬ 50 *mf*

S fath - er moved through theys of we, sing - ing each new leaf out of each tree (and *mf*)

A fath - er moved through theys of we, sing - ing each new leaf out of each tree (and *mf*)

T *unis.*
 fath - er moved through theys... My fath - er... sing - ing each new leaf... my fath - er...

B fath - er moved through theys... My fath - er... sing - ing each new leaf... my fath - er...

⑬

52

gently and lightly *unis.* *p*

S ev - 'ry child was sure that spring danced when she heard my fath - er sing) My

gently and lightly

A ev - 'ry child was sure that spring danced when she heard my fath - er sing)

mf *gently and lightly*

T ev - 'ry child was sure... spring — danced when she heard my fath - er sing)

mf *unis.* *gently and lightly*

B ev - 'ry child was sure... spring — danced when she heard my fath - er sing)

mf *gently and lightly* *p*

54

rit. *a tempo* *p*

S fath - er... my fath - er... my Fath - er... —

unis. *p* *mf*

A my fath - er... let

p *mf*

T my fath - er... then let men kill which can - not share, let

p *mf*

B my fath - er... then let men kill which can - not share, let

rit. *a tempo* *p* *mf*

(14)

56 *mf*

S
my Fath - er... schem - ing i - mag - ine, pas - sion willed,

A
blood and flesh be mud and mire, schem - ing i - mag - ine, pas - sion willed,

T
blood and flesh be mud and mire, schem - ing i - mag - ine, pas - sion willed,

B
blood and flesh be mud and mire, my Fath - er...

58

S
ah _____ giv - ing to steal and cru - el kind,

A
ah giv - ing to steal and cru - el kind, a

T
free - dom a drug that's bought and sold giv - ing to steal and cru - el kind, a

B
free - dom a drug that's bought and sold giv - ing to steal and cru - el kind,

15

60 *unis.*

S to dif - fer a dis - ease of same,

A heart to — fear, — to doubt a mind, to dif - fer a dis - ease of same,

T heart to — fear, — to doubt a mind, con -

B con -

62 *p* (16)

S though dull... *p*

A though dull were all we taste as bright,

T form the pin - na - cle of am though dull were all we taste as bright, *unis. p*

B form the pin - na - cle of am my Fath - er... *(p)*

(16)

64 *mp* *mf*

S
bit - ter all ut - ter - ly things sweet, mag - got - y mi - nus and dumb death

A
bit - ter all ut - ter - ly things_ sweet, mag - got - y mi - nus and dumb death

T
bit - ter all ut - ter - ly things_ sweet, mag - got - y mi - nus and dumb death

B
mp *mf* *unis. mf*
my Fath - er... my Fath - er...

mp *mf*

66 *f emphatically* *f emphatically* *f emphatically* *f emphatically* *f* *p* *p* *p*

S
all we in - her - it, all be - queath and noth - ing quite so least as truth-

A
all we in - her - it, all be - queath and noth - ing quite so least as truth-

T
all we in - her - it, all be - queath ah I

B
all we in - her - it, all be - queath I

f *p*

68 *rit. to end*

S *f* be - cause my Fath - er lived his soul _____

A *f* be - cause my Fath - er lived his soul _____

T *f* say though hate were why men breathe - be - cause my Fath - er lived his soul _____

B *f* say though hate were why men breathe - be - cause my Fath - er lived his soul _____

rit. to end

70 *(rit.)*

S *unis.* love is the whole and more than all. *p*

A *mf tenderly* , *p tenderly* , *pp in memory*

T *mf tenderly* , *p tenderly* , *pp in memory*

B love is the whole and more than my Fath - er... my Fath - er... my Fath - er...

(rit.)