

Three Days by the Sea

for SATB Chorus (*divisi*) and Piano

Thomas Merton (1915–1968)

Gwyneth Walker

1. The Bottom of the Sea

*start slowly and accelerate,
into a blur, unmeasured*

Slowly ♩ = c. 60

The piano introduction consists of three measures. The first measure is in 3/4 time with a *pp* dynamic. The second and third measures are in 4/4 time with a *p* dynamic. The bass line features triplet eighth notes and a dotted quarter note. The treble line has a few chords. A wavy line above the staff indicates a tremolo effect. The piece ends with a double bar line and a dashed line labeled *8^{vb}*.

Piano

pp *p*

Ped. ad lib.

8^{vb}

A

p softly, as if creating a magical world

T
8

The bot-tom of the sea has come — And

p softly, as if creating a magical world

B

The bot-tom of the sea has come — And

The vocal parts (Tenor and Bass) and piano accompaniment are shown. The vocal parts enter at measure 4 with the lyrics 'The bot-tom of the sea has come — And'. The piano accompaniment features a wavy line above the staff, a *pp* dynamic, and a *p* dynamic. The bass line has triplet eighth notes and a dotted quarter note. The treble line has a few chords. A wavy line above the staff indicates a tremolo effect. The piece ends with a double bar line and a dashed line labeled *8^{vb}*.

pp *p*

8^{vb}

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“The Bottom of the Sea” is the first of three movements in the set “Three Days by the Sea.”
The other two pieces, “Gifts from the Sea” (Catalog No. 6571)
and “Down to the Sea” (Catalog No. 6572)
are available from the publisher.

8

p softly, as if creating a magical world

S The fish-es' and the mer-maids' home,

p softly, as if creating a magical world

A The fish-es' and the mer-maids' home,

T build-ed in my noise-less room —

B build-ed in my noise-less room —

pp *p* *pp*

8^{vb} Ped. l.v.

11

div. *mp*

Whose it is most, most hell to be —

mp

Whose it is most, most hell to be —

mp 3

Out of the heav-y - hang-ing sea —

mp 3

Out of the heav-y - hang-ing sea —

p *mp*

(Ped.)

15 *unis. mf* *mf* *mf* *mf* *div. 3*

And in the thin, thin change - a - ble air

And in the thin, thin change - a - ble air

17 **B** *(mf)* *(mf)*

Or un - room sleep some oth - er where; —

Or un - room sleep some oth - er where; —

19

(div.) (mf) *f*

But play their cor - al vi - o - lins

(mf) *f*

But play their cor - al vi - o - lins

mf

Where

mf

Where

6 6 6 6 6 6 *cresc.* 6 6 *f* 6 6

22

unis. f

The

f

The

wa - ters most lock mu - sic in:

f

wa - ters most lock mu - sic in:

mf *cresc.* *f*

6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

24

poco rit.

bot - tom of my room, _____ the

bot - tom of, the bot - tom of my room, the

(f)
The bot - tom of, the bot - tom of my room, the
unis. (f)

The bot - tom of my room, the

poco rit.

26

a tempo

sea. _____

sea. _____

sea. _____

sea. _____

a tempo

f

Ped.

27

Musical score for measures 27-28. It features four staves: three vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, Tenor) and one piano accompaniment staff. The vocal parts have long, sustained notes. The piano part includes a sixteenth-note arpeggiated figure in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Dynamics include *(f)* and *Ped.*

29

C

Musical score for measures 29-30. It features four staves: three vocal staves and one piano accompaniment staff. The vocal parts have lyrics: "Full of voice - less cur - tain - deep". The piano part includes a sixteenth-note arpeggiated figure in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Dynamics include *mf cantabile* and *Ped.*

31

Musical score for measures 31-32. The score is in 2/4 time and consists of four staves. The top two staves are vocal lines with lyrics: "Ah! There mer - maids som - nam - bules come sleep". The first vocal line includes dynamic markings *p* and *mf*, and a *div.* marking. The piano accompaniment features sixteenth-note patterns with sixteenth rests, marked with a '6' for sixteenth notes. The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

33

Musical score for measures 33-34. The score is in 2/4 time and consists of four staves. The top two staves are vocal lines with lyrics: "Ah! Where flut - ed half - lights show the way,". The first vocal line includes dynamic markings *p* and *mf*, and a *div.* marking. The piano accompaniment features sixteenth-note patterns with sixteenth rests, marked with a '6' for sixteenth notes. The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

35 *p* *f*

Ah! _____ And there, there lost or-ches-tras, or-ches-tras, or-ches-tras play _____

p *f*

Ah! _____ And there, there lost or-ches-tras, or-ches-tras, or-ches-tras play _____

f

there lost or-ches-tras, or-ches-tras, or-ches-tras play _____

f

there lost or-ches-tras, or-ches-tras, or-ches-tras play _____

f 6 6 3 3 3 3

38 *mf* **D** *dim.* 3

And down the man - y quar-ter-lights come _____

mf *dim.* 3

And down the man - y quar-ter-lights come _____

3 3 3 3 *mf* *p* Ped. _____

40 *(dim.) p* *unis. p*

(dim.) p

mf *p*

To the dim mirth of my a - qua - drome: _____

To the dim mirth of my a - qua - drome: _____

mf *p* *mf* *p*

(Ped.) _____ Ped. _____

43 *rit.* **E** *a tempo* *as if in the distance*

bot-tom of my sea, _____ *solo p* ...lost

The bot-tom of my sea,

p The bot-tom of my sea, the room. _____

p The bot-tom of my sea, the room. _____

rit. *a tempo*

mf 3 3 3 3

46 *solo p* *poco rit.*

S ...lost or - ches - tras play _____

2 or - ches-tras, or - ches-tras, or - ches-tras, or - ches-tras play _____

A *solo p* or - ches-tras, or - ches-tras, or - ches-tras, or - ches-tras play _____

2 *solo p* Ah, _____ ah, _____ play _____

T _____ The

B _____ The

p 6 6 6 6 *poco rit.* 6 6 6 3

48 **Slightly Slower** *rit. to end*

S
A
T
B

bot - tom of the sea has come

bot - tom of the sea has come

Slightly Slower *rit. to end*

8^{va} *p* *poco Ped.*

50 *rit. and fade* *pp*

T
B

rit. and fade *pp*

(8^{va})

l.v.

Ped.

*Commissioned by the Key Chorale, in celebration of their 20th season, 2005.
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Daniel Moe, Music Director.*

Performance Notes

It is suggested that each of the poems (texts) be read aloud before the performance of each song. This will allow the audience to have abundant familiarity with the beautiful lyrics. Thus, the readings themselves will become part of the expression of the words.

The readings might be done by members of the chorus: a tenor or baritone might read “The Bottom of the Sea,” a soprano or alto might read “Gifts from the Sea” and the two readers might alternate reading lines of “Down to the Sea” (as the musical setting also alternates between the men’s and women’s voices). A natural and comfortable reading style is recommended.

Program Notes

The sea is a universal force which speaks to each of us in unique ways. Thus, these texts by three different authors were selected for this set of choral works. It is intended that a diversity of aspects of the sea be explored.

“The Bottom of the Sea” is a product of imagination—the ocean floor, the home of mermaids, “where waters most lock music in,” a dimly-lit room where “lost orchestras play.” (The orchestras play a waltz.) This song is characterized by descending lines into the depths of the piano and choral ranges.

“Gifts from the Sea” are found on the beach. One might find shells, perhaps the shell of a hermit crab. One might also find simplicity. Patience and faith come from the sea. “One should lie empty, open, choiceless as a beach.”

Norah Mary Holland, a Canadian poet and cousin of W. B. Yeats, provides the lyrics for the closing song, “Down to the Sea.” Here is the dark, strong, passionate sea, the “waters, wild and wide.” This is sustained and powerful music, with the rolling waves often portrayed in the piano accompaniment. A love and a fear of the sea are combined. “O strong and terrible Mother Sea, let me lie once more on your cool white breast.” There is no home on the land. In the final voyage, “I will go down to the sea again.”

—Gwyneth Walker

(The concept for these songs was formed during the composer’s residency at the Hermitage Artists Retreat on Manasota Key, Florida during the Winter of 2004.)

Words for “The Bottom of the Sea” (Thomas Merton)

The bottom of the sea has come
And builded in my noiseless room
The fishes’ and the mermaids’ home,
Whose it is most, most hell to be
Out of the heavy-hanging sea
And in the thin, thin changeable air
Or unroom sleep some other where;
But play their coral violins
Where waters most lock music in:

The bottom my room, the sea.
Full of voiceless curtaindeeps
There mermaids somnambules come sleep
Where fluted half-lights show the way,
And there, there lost orchestras play
And down the many quarterlights come
To the dim mirth of my aquadrome:
The bottom of the sea, the room.

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Gwyneth Walker

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. She now lives on a dairy farm in Braintree, Vermont.

Gwyneth Walker is a proud resident of Vermont. She is the recipient of the Year 2000 “Lifetime Achievement Award” from the Vermont Arts Council. Walker’s catalog includes over 160 commissioned works for orchestra, band, chorus and chamber ensembles. The music of Gwyneth Walker is published E. C. Schirmer Music Company of Boston (choral and vocal music) and MMB Music of St. Louis (orchestral and instrumental music).