## There Shall Be Christmas Day

Joyce Kilmer (1886-1918)

"Wartime Christmas"

Joan Szymko

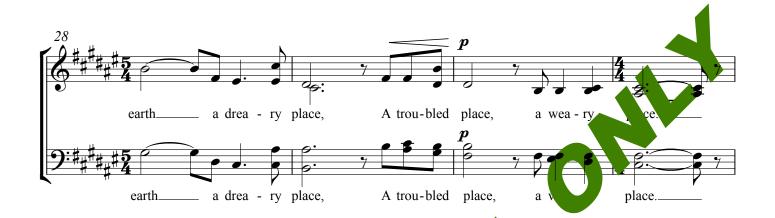






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## Wartime Christmas

Led by a star, a golden star, The youngest star, an olden star, Here the kings and the shepherds are A kneeling on the ground.

What did they come to the inn to see? God in the Highest, and this is He, A baby asleep on His mother's knee And with her kisses crowned.

Now is the earth a dreary place, A troubled place, a weary place. Peace has hidden her lovely face And turned in tears away.

Yet the sun, through the war-cloud, sees Babies asleep on their mother's knees. While there are love and home—and these— There shall be Christmas Day. American poet Alfred Joyce Kilmer (1886-1918) is best known for his poem, "Trees." ("I think that I shall never see / A poem lovely as a tree...") He displayed a talent for language arts and public speaking early on, as a young boy in grammar school. He attended New York's Columbia University, with a teaching career in mind, but he quickly turned his attention toward writing, becoming a full time journalist, lecturer, and poet, working for publications such as Funk and Wagnalls and the New York Times. He left a successful career and his wife and family to enlist for military service immediately upon US declaration of war on Germany in 1917. He served as a sergeant with the "Fighting" 69th" regiment in France. Kilmer actively sought out hazardous combat duty. He was killed by a sniper's bullet in July of 1918. Joyce Kilmer was a man of ardent religious faith. He adored his wife and five children. Family life, his faith and his experience on the front lines of WWI France lend a poignancy to "A Wartime Christmas, " a poem most certainly penned during his tour of duty in France.

**Joan Szymko's** (b.1957) music is performed by distinguished choral ensembles across North America and around the world. Her works have been sung at international festivals and competitions, and at every national conference of the American Choral Directors Association since 2003. Abundant lyricism, rhythmic integrity and vigorous attention to text are hallmarks of Szymko's diverse and distinctive choral writing. The ACDA has recognized Szymko's contribution to the choral arts in Ameica by selecting her to compose the prestigious Raymond W. Brock commission for 2010. For more information, see www.joanszymko.com.