

JS-057 / A Burst of Song (3 mvts.) / dur: 7:45
SATB, w/div; tenor, mezzo-sop soli, piano

JOAN SZYMKO

A Burst of Song

1. A Shower of Mercy
2. A Kiss of Blessing
3. Thee and Me

setting of poetry by
Rabindranath Tagore

for satb chorus, tenor & mezzo-soprano soli
and piano

*original TTBB version commissioned by the New Jersey Gay Men's Chorus
in celebration of its 20th Anniversary Season, Steven A. Russell, Artistic Director*

JOAN SZYMKO MUSIC

Joan Szymko

Joan Szymko's music is sung by distinguished ensembles across North America and abroad, with performances at international competitions and festivals, at state and regional conferences, and at every National Conference of the American Choral Directors Association since 2003. Especially significant is Szymko's contribution to the body of quality literature for women's voices. The ACDA has recognized Szymko's lasting contribution to the choral arts by selecting her as the recipient of the 2010 Raymond W. Brock Memorial Commission, "All Works of Love."

Composing for vocal ensembles is an extension of Joan Szymko's creativity as a choral director; her passion for the art of singing, an embodied approach to sound, her dedication to storytelling and an insistence on quality texts all relate to her predilections as a conductor and are reflected in her choral compositions. Joan lives and works in the Pacific Northwest. She serves on the faculty of the Music School at Portland State University as director of PSU's select women's chorus, Vox Femina. She leads Aurora Chorus as Artistic Director and conductor, a post she has held since 1993. A resident composer with the award winning Do Jump! Movement Theater, Joan has performed her music on tour with the company from Broadway to LA.

Notes

A Burst of Song was commissioned by the New Jersey Gay Men's Chorus in 2010 for their 20th Anniversary Season. I sought texts that celebrated the healing aspects of song, especially since this community chorus had lived through the AIDS epidemic and so had experienced the pain and grief of overwhelming loss. Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), a native of Bengal was first and foremost a poet. The texts for A Burst of Song are primarily from his most famous volume: *Gitanjali: Song Offerings* (1912). I hoped to illuminate the poet's heartfelt beliefs about the divine grace and power of song. While exploring Tagore and selecting texts, I found these words from his book, *Fruit Gathering*: "To the birds you gave songs, the birds gave you songs in return. You gave me only voice, yet asked for more, and I sing." Around the same time I happened to be reading about French composer, organist and ornithologist Oliver Messiaen, and his use of birdsong in his works. The opening notes sounded by the piano in A Shower of Mercy are a kind of "nod" to this happy coincidence, and served as inspiration for the entire work and this brief passing theme (descending minor 3rds) reoccurs as transitional material in the last movement.

A Burst of Song

No.1 A Shower of Mercy

*When the heart is hard and parched up,
come upon me with a shower of mercy.
When grace is lost from life,
come with a burst of song.*

— excerpt from "Beggarly Heart" (*Gitanjali*)

No.2 A Kiss of Blessing

*This song of mine will wind its music around you,
my child, like the fond arms of love.
This song of mine will touch your forehead
like a kiss of blessing.
My song will be like a pair of wings to your dreams,
it will transport your heart to the verge of the unknown.
It will be like the faithful star overhead
when dark night is over your road.
My song will sit in the pupils of your eyes,
and will carry your sight into the heart of things.
And when my voice is silenced in death,
my song will speak in your living heart.*

— "This Song of Mine" (*The Crescent Moon* #38)

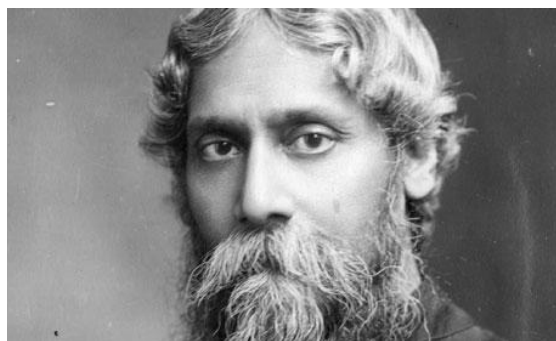
No. 3 Thee and Me

*The great pageant of thee and me has overspread the sky.
With the tune of thee and me all the air is vibrant,
and all ages pass with the hiding and seeking of thee and me.*

— excerpt from "Maya" (*Gitanjali*)

Rabindranath Tagore

Bengali writer Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) worked in various literary genres, but was first and foremost a poet. He was the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize for Literature (1913). The texts for "A Burst of Song" are primarily from his most famous volume: *Gitanjali: Song Offerings* (1912) which he himself translated into English.



photograph: Hulton Archive

A Burst of Song

1. A Shower of Mercy

Rabindranath Tagore
excerpt from "Beggarly Heart" (Gitanjali)

Joan Szymko

Piano introduction in 4/4 time, starting at a tempo of 72. The music is in G major. The first system features a forte (*f*) dynamic, followed by a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic, and concludes with a *poco rit.* (slightly slower) section in mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamics.

Measures 6-8. The vocal line is marked "A tempo" and "(opt. tenor solo)". Dynamics range from piano (*p*) to pianissimo (*pp*). The piano accompaniment is marked "A tempo" and "sostenuto". A large green watermark "for perusal only" is overlaid on the score.

When the heart is hard and parched come u-pon me

Measures 12-15. The vocal line continues with lyrics "with a show-er of mer-cy...". Dynamics include piano (*p*), *dim.* (diminuendo), pianissimo (*pp*), and *end solo*. The tempo changes to "Poco più mosso". The piano accompaniment includes *dim.*, *pp*, and *sub mf* dynamics. The piece concludes with a *Ped.* (pedal) marking.

with a show-er of mer-cy...

Tutti

17

f *mf*

T
come u - pon me with a show - er of mer - cy.

B
come u - pon me with a show'r of mer - cy

f

Ped.

Tempo primo

20

mf *dim.* *mp* *accel.*

S
When grace is lost from life, come,

A
is lost from life, come,

T
When grace is lost from life, come, come, come,

B
When grace is lost, come

mf *dim.* *mp* *mf*

Tempo primo

legato *8va* *dim.* *mp* *mf*

Ped.

31

ff Come with a burst of song.

ff Come with a burst of song.

ff Come with a burst of song.

ff Come with a burst of song.

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ff

attacca

A Burst of Song

2. A Kiss of Blessing

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)
"This Song of Mine,"
#38 from *The Crescent Moon*

Joan Szymko

Mezzo-Sop Solo

p *espressivo* *mp*

This song of mine, will wind its mu-sic a-round you, my child, This

S1

A

p

Piano

p *espressivo*

4

rit. *A tempo* *p* *mp*

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song of mine will wind its mu-sic a-round you like the fond arms of love, the

S1

S2

A

mp

song of mine will wind a-round you the fond arms of

wind its mu-sic,

4

rit. *A tempo* *p* *cresc.* *dim.*

Piano

9 **poco rit.** **Poco meno mosso** ♩=60

fond arms of love...
love, of love...
the fond arms of love...
the fond arms of love...

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poco rit. **Poco meno mosso** ♩=60

14 **mezzo solo** **mp** **A**

This song of mine will touch your fore-head like a

mezzo solo **mp** **A**

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23

Più mosso ♩=84

like a kiss. _____

like a kiss, _____ like _____ a _____ kiss. _____

like a kiss. _____

like a _____ kiss. _____

like a kiss, _____ like _____ a _____ kiss. _____

kiss, _____ like a _____ kiss. _____

Detailed description: This block contains the vocal score for the first system, measures 23-26. It features five vocal staves. The first staff has a melodic line with a long note in measure 24. The second staff has a vocal line with a dynamic change from *mf* to *f* in measure 24. The third and fourth staves are similar to the first. The fifth staff is a bass line. The lyrics are: "like a kiss. _____", "like a kiss, _____ like _____ a _____ kiss. _____", "like a kiss. _____", "like a _____ kiss. _____", "like a kiss, _____ like _____ a _____ kiss. _____", and "kiss, _____ like a _____ kiss. _____".

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23

Più mosso ♩=84

mp *cresc. poco a poco*

Detailed description: This block contains the piano accompaniment for the first system, measures 23-26. It features a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The music is in 4/4 time. The tempo is *Più mosso* at 84 beats per minute. The dynamics are *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *cresc. poco a poco* (crescendo poco a poco). The accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a more complex rhythmic pattern in the left hand.

28 **B** *excitedly*
mf

My song will be like a pair of wings to your

My song will be like a pair of wings to your

My song will be like a pair of wings to your

My song will be like a pair of wings to your

28 **B** *with vigor*
mf *cresc. poco a poco*

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30

dreams like wings to your

dreams like wings to your

dreams like wings to your

dreams like wings to your

30

32 *f* *mf*

dreams, your dreams, it will trans- port your heart

dreams, like wings it will trans- port your heart

your dreams,

dreams, like wings,

T/B tacet to M48

35 *f* *f*

S to the verge of the un- known

A to the verge of the un- known

35 *f*

38 **C** *f* Alto

A It will be like the faith- full star o - ver - head when

38 **C**

41 *molto rit.* ♩=72

S *mp*
o - ver your road.

A *dim.* N.B. *mf*
dark night is o - ver your road, o - ver your road.

41 *molto rit.* ♩=72

mf *dim.*

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45 **D** *Poco meno mosso* *mp*

mezzo-sop *mp*
My song will sit in the pu - pils of your eyes, and will

tenor solo *p*
My song will sit in the pu - pils of your eyes,

S *Tutti Sop* *mp*
and will

45 **D** *Poco meno mosso* *dolce e sostenuto* *mp*

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molto rit. . . . *Tempo primo*

55

Mz *p* si - lenced, si - lenced in death, *pp*

T *p* si - lenced, si - lenced in death, *pp*

55 *molto rit.* . . . *Tempo primo*

p *dim.*

Ped.

59 *mp*

Mz *mp* my song will speak in your liv - ing heart,

T *mp* my song will speak in your liv - ing heart,

S *p* *poco* my song will speak in your liv - ing heart,

A *p* *poco* my song will speak in your liv - ing heart,

T *p* in your liv - ing heart,

B *p* in your liv - ing heart,

59 *pp* *p*

Ped. *Ped.*

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64

p *dim.*
in your liv - ing heart.

p *dim.*
in your liv - ing heart.

dim.
in your liv - ing heart.

poco *dim.*

dim.
in your liv - ing heart.

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div. *dim.*
in your liv - ing heart.

64

68

rit.

attacca

A Burst of Song

3. Thee and Me

Rabindranath Tagore
from "Maya" (*Gitanjali*)

Joan Szymko

con brio! ♩=166

Piano *f*

The piano introduction consists of five measures in 3/8 time. The right hand plays chords and moving lines, while the left hand plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The dynamic is marked *f* (forte).

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S 6 ♩=166

The great pa - geant of thee and me has

mf

T 8

The great pa - geant of thee and me has

The vocal part is in 4/4 time, marked *mf* (mezzo-forte). The lyrics are: "The great pa - geant of thee and me has". The piano accompaniment is in 4/4 time, marked *mf*. It features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Fingerings are indicated: 2, 1, 2 for the first three notes of the right hand; 5, 4, 3, 1 for the first four notes of the left hand. The piece ends with a fermata over the final note.

8

S o - ver spread the sky. *N.B. cresc.*

A o - - - - ver spread the *cresc.*

T o - ver spread the sky. *N.B. div. cresc.*

B o - ver spread the sky, *cresc.*

cresc.

Ped.

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11

the sky. *div.*

sky the sky. *f*

the sky. *f*

o - ver - spread the sky. *f*

f

13

mf
With the tune of thee and

mf
With the tune of thee and

mf

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15

all the air is vi - brant, and

all the air is vi - brant, and

me, all the air is vi - brant, all the air is vi - brant

me, all the air, is vi - brant

f

f

f

f

cresc.

R.H.

L.H.

Ped.

17

all a - ges pass, and
 all a - ges pass, and
 and
 and

f L.H. R.H. *div.* *Ped.*

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20

all a - ges pass, and all a - ges
 all a - ges pass, and all a - ges
 all a - ges pass, and all a - ges
 all a - ges pass, and all a - ges

accel. 6 6 6 6 *Ped.*

Tempo primo

light-heartedly

23

pass... with the hid - ing and

pass... with the hid - ing and

pass... hid - ing

pass... hid - ing

hid - ing

hid - ing

light-heartedly

dim.

mf

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28

seek - ing of thee and me.

seek - ing of thee and me.

seek - ing thee and me,

seek - ing, thee and me,

mf

mf

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42

N.B.

thee and me has o - ver spread the

o - - - - ver

thee and me has o - ver spread the

Oh o - ver spread the

R.H.

3 1

Ped.

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45

cresc.

sky the

spread the sky the

sky the

sky, o - ver - spread the

cresc.

47

cresc. *ff*

sky.

cresc. *ff*

sky.

cresc. *ff*

sky.

cresc. *ff*

sky

for perusal only

49