

M. E. Valverde

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Look Down, Fair Moon
for SATB chorus (div.) and piano

About the Poet

Born the second of nine children in 1819, Walt Whitman grew up on Long Island and in Brooklyn. An avid young reader, he worked the trade of printing as a teenager in New York City. Subsequently, he spent five years as a schoolteacher back on Long Island before pursuing a long-term career in journalism. While working for a few months as editor of a New Orleans paper, he observed the sale of enslaved humans. Upon his return to New York, he was motivated to start a “free soil” newspaper called the *Brooklyn Freeman*. Though not an abolitionist himself, he wrote a collection of poems *Leaves of Grass*, which emphasized the potential of humanity to transcend the limits of morality, psychology, and politics. The first edition of the book — which was regarded as highly controversial for the time — was copyrighted in 1855. Over nearly forty years, after multiple new editions, he expanded it from twelve poems to over three hundred. During the Civil War, Whitman traveled to Washington, D.C. to visit his brother who was wounded fighting for the Union. He remained for over a decade and devoted a significant amount of time volunteering at hospitals, meeting as many as 100,000 wounded soldiers. Having intimately witnessed the horrific repercussions of war, he entered another period of prolific writing. In 1865, he published *Drum-Taps* and *Sequel*, featuring an elegy for President Abraham Lincoln. Not eight years later, he suffered a stroke and became partially paralyzed. He moved to Camden, New Jersey and lived out his final years elaborating on *Leaves of Grass*.

Look down, fair moon,
and bathe this scene,
Pour softly down night's nimbus floods
on faces ghastly, swollen, purple,
On the dead on their backs
with arms toss'd wide,
Pour down your unstinted nimbus,
sacred moon.

“Look Down, Fair Moon” from *Leaves of Grass* (1881) by Walt Whitman.

Composer's Notes

This nocturne is a setting of poetry contemporary with the American Civil War. With a prayerful tone, in imperative tense, Whitman pleads for calm and healing for those who are wounded or fallen. The images of moon, “nimbus” or rain clouds, and night are all relevant. During the night, the living recover from the stresses of the day; the rain falling from the sky is a metaphor for cleansing water or tears; and of course, the mysterious beaming moon is an unchanging source of spiritual nourishment. Every time we are made aware of the unspeakable carnage of war or terrorism, foreign or domestic, we are compelled to ponder our humanity and our mortality. In the spirit of elegy, I want to inspire further contemplation and call for the reconciliation and mending of our people.

“Look Down, Fair Moon,” in its original voicing, was commissioned by Texas Music Educators Association Region 2 and was premiered in November 2015 at Margo Jones Performance Hall at Texas Woman's University by the All-District Treble Choir under the direction of Cheryl Wilson. The revoiced SATB version was commissioned by a consortium of nineteen ensembles in the United States and was premiered throughout the 2023-2024 concert season.

dur. = ca. 3'

Jointly Commissioned by
 Abilene High School Choir, Danette Whiteley, conductor
 Boulder High School Choir, Kelly Carmichael Phipps, conductor
 Cambridge Rindge and Latin School Traveling Chorus, Ivan Stefanov, conductor
 the Chamber Singers of Haverford and Bryn Mawr Colleges, Scott AuCoin, conductor
 Chromatica Chorale, David Huff, conductor,
 CU Boulder University Choir, Elizabeth Swanson, conductor
 the E.O. Smith High School Chamber Singers, Amanda Hanzlik, conductor
 Frisco Heritage High School Choir, Christopher Rhodes, conductor
 Linn-Benton Community College Choirs, Raymund Ocampo, conductor
 Nederland High School Loquations, Elizabeth Evans, conductor
 North Fort Myers High School Choir, Christina Koller, conductor
 Omaha Central High School Singers, Sara Cowan, conductor
 Penn State University Choir, Bryan Nichols, conductor
 Portland Community Chorus, Camille Saucier, conductor
 Reed College Chorus, Shohei Kobayashi, conductor
 Texas Wesleyan University Chamber Singers, Will Chandler, conductor
 Towson University Chorale, Diana Sáez, conductor
 the University of Portland Singers, David De Lyser, conductor
 V. Sue Cleveland High School Concert Choir, Jadira Flamm, conductor

Look Down, Fair Moon

for SATB chorus (div.) and piano

Walt Whitman
1819-92

Mari Esabel Valverde
b. 1987

Soothingly, *larghetto* ♩ = ca. 63

The musical score is for a SATB chorus and piano. It features five staves: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, and Piano. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is 'Soothingly, larghetto' with a quarter note equal to approximately 63 beats per minute. The piano part includes markings like 'mp like gentle rain' and 'dim.'. The vocal parts have lyrics 'Look' and dynamic markings 'mp'. A large diagonal watermark reads 'Not authorized for performance!'.

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4

S
down, look down, fair moon, and

A
down, look down, fair moon,

T
8
down, look down, fair moon, and

B
down, look down, fair moon,

Pno.
p

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7

S
bathe this scene, *mf* *dim.*

A
and bathe this scene, *mf* *dim.*

T
bathe this scene, *mf* *dim.*

B
and bathe this scene, *mf* *dim.*

Pno.
mp

10

p \rightrightarrows *mp* *opt. div.*

S
Pour soft - ly down night's

A
Pour soft - ly down night's

T
8
Pour soft - ly Pour night's

B
Pour soft - ly down night's

Pno.
sub. p

12

S
nim - bus floods *f*

A
nim - bus floods *f*

T
8
nim - bus floods *f*

B
nim - bus floods *f*

Pno.
mp *molto cresc.* *f*

Red. *

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13 *mf*

S on fac - es ghas - ly, swol - len fac - es swol - len,

A *mf*
on fac - es ghas - ly, swol - len, ghas - ly,

T *mf*
on fac - es ghas - ly, swol - len fac - es swol - len,

B *mf*
on fac - es ghas - ly, swol - len, ghas - ly,

Pno. *mp*

18

S pur - ple, On the dead, on their backs, with

A pur - ple, On the dead, on their backs, with

T pur - ple,

B pur - ple,

Pno. *p*

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20

S
arms toss'd wide, Pour down, pour

A
arms toss'd wide, Pour down,

T
with arms toss'd wide, Pour down, pour

B
with arms toss'd wide, Pour down,

Pno.
cresc. mf joyfully, with brilliance

Red.

* Note: This is the only divisi in the soprano that is not optional. The divisi in the alto is completely optional. The only reason first altos would sing the small notes is for optimal balance.

23

rit. *mf* *poco cresc.*

S down your un - stint - ed nim - bus, sac - red

A pour down your un - stint - ed nim - bus, sac - red

T down your un - stint - ed nim - bus, sac - red

B pour down your un - stint - ed nim - bus, sac - red

Pno. *decresc.* *mf*

And.

A tempo *mp*

26

S, A moon. Look

T, B moon. Look

Pno. *mp* *dim.*

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29

S
down, look down, fair moon, and

A
down, look down, fair moon, and

T
8
down, look down, fair moon, and

B
down, look down, fair moon, and

Pno.
p

32 *opt. div.* *mf*

S
bathe this scene.

A
bathe this scene.

T
bathe this scene.

B
bathe this scene.

Pno. *mp*

33 *mf*

Pno.



Award-winning transgender Mexican-American composer Mari Esabel Valverde has been commissioned by the American Choral Directors Association, Boston Choral Ensemble, Cantus, the Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses, Los Angeles Master Chorale, One Voice Mixed Chorus, Portland's Resonance Ensemble, Seattle Men's and Women's Choruses, the Texas Music Educators Association, and the University of Michigan Men's Glee Club. Her music appears on multiple albums: Ensemble Vocabella Limburg's *Vom Werden und Vergehen—Songs of Life and Death*, Peninsula Women's Chorus's *Women Making Waves*, Cantus's *The Covid-19 Sessions*, the International Orange Chorale of San Francisco's *Hope in Times of Disquiet*, SACRA/PROFANA's *A Longing for Christmas*, Seattle Pro Musica's *Solstice: Music of Light for the Holidays*, Resonance Ensemble's *LISTEN*, and Eric Ferring and Madeline Slettedahl's *No Choice But Love: Songs of the LGBTQ+ Community*.

She has also built a reputation as a singer, educator, adjudicator, and translator. She has recently performed with Border CrosSing, Dallas Chamber Choir, and EXIGENCE Vocal Ensemble. Following six years as a high school classical voice instructor, she spent two years specializing in transgender voice training. Proficient in Spanish, French, and Brazilian Portuguese, she has translated numerous vocal works and documents including phonetic guides of Ravel's opera *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* and Villa-Lobos's *Rasga o Coração*. A native of North Texas, she holds degrees from St. Olaf College, the European American Musical Alliance in Paris, France, and San Francisco Conservatory of Music. She is a member of ASCAP and the American Choral Directors Association.

Music for Mixed Chorus

Après un rêve/ After a Dream	SSAATTBB a cappella
Best Wishes	SATB a cappella
Border Lines	SATB + guitar or cello
The Cloths of Heaven	SATB + piano/harp + string ens.
Comfort and Joy	SATB + piano
En la noche entraremos	SATB a cappella (div.)
In the Night We Will Go In	
A Green Voice	SATB (div.) + piano
Hjärtat/The Heart	SATB a cappella (div.)
I Flow... I Am	SATB a cappella (div.)
Look Down, Fair Moon	SATB (div.) + piano
Månskenskväll/	SATB a cappella (div.)
Moonlit Evening	
Oracle of Spring	SATB a cappella
Our Phoenix	SATB + trumpet + piano
Patterns on the Snow	SATB (div.) + piano
Prayer of St. Francis	SATB + piano
Still wie die Nacht/	SSAATTBB a cappella
Calm as the Night	
United in Song	solo voice or SATB a cappella
Up/Rising Into	SATB a cappella (div.)
We Hold Your Names Sacred	SATB (div.) + piano
When Thunder Comes	SATB (div.) + piano + opt. taiko or perc.
When You Are Old and Gray	SATB + piano/harp + string ens.
and Full of Sleep	
Winter Ride	SATB a cappella
Wondrous Glow	SATB a cappella (div.)

For all audio, visit [SoundCloud.com/MEValverde](https://www.soundcloud.com/MEValverde).

www.MariValverde.com