

JOAN SZYMKO

No.1 from the choral suite, *It Is Happiness*

The Summer Day

poem by
Mary Oliver

*Tell me, what is it you plan to do
With your one wild and precious life?*

JOAN SZYMKO (b. 1957)

Joan Szymko's music is regularly performed across North America and abroad including performances at national and international choral festivals and competitions. Notably, her music has been presented on stage or in session at every National Conference of the American Choral Directors Association since 2003. The ACDA recognized Szymko's lasting impact on the choral arts in North America by selecting her as the recipient of the prestigious Raymond W. Brock Memorial Commission in 2010. As resident composer with Portland, OR based Do Jump! Movement Theater (1995-present), Szymko has created vocal underscoring for several major touring productions in the US, earning praise from the New York Times for her "ethereal vocal music." Szymko makes her home in the Pacific Northwest where she has led choruses for over four decades. A dynamic conductor, she workshops her compositions with numerous choirs as a visiting artist in a variety of community and educational settings across the country, and abroad. For additional information, see www.joanszymko.com.

MARY OLIVER (1935-2019)

"Mary Oliver was born and raised in Maple Hills Heights, a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio. She would retreat from a difficult home to the nearby woods, where she would build huts of sticks and grass and write poems . . . As a young poet, Oliver was deeply influenced by Edna St. Vincent Millay and briefly lived in Millay's home, helping Norma Millay organize her sister's papers. Oliver is notoriously reticent about her private life but it was during this period that she met her long-time partner, Molly Malone Cook. The couple moved to Provincetown, Massachusetts, and the surrounding Cape Cod landscape has had a marked influence on Oliver's work. Known for its clear and poignant observations and evocative use of the natural world, Oliver's poetry is firmly rooted in place and the Romantic nature tradition."
– "Mary Oliver." Poetry Foundation, www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/mary-oliver

Oliver's work received early critical attention and she became one of America's most significant and best-selling poets. Among her many honors are winning the Pulitzer Prize in 1984 for *American Primitive*, the 1992 National Book Award for *New and Selected Poetry* and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life? Such is the emphatic query in "The Summer Day," the first movement of *It Is Happiness*, a twenty minute choral suite for treble voices and chamber ensemble featuring settings of three iconic poems by Mary Oliver. Joan Szymko is privileged to be one of just a handful of composers ever granted permission to set Oliver's poetry to music. This stand-alone movement has been rescored by the composer for piano with flute obbligato for SSA, SAB and TBB ensembles.

The Summer Day

by Mary Oliver

Who made the world?
Who made the swan, and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper?
This grasshopper, I mean—
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down—
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
With your one wild and precious life?

"The Summer Day" by Mary Oliver

Reprinted by the permission of The Charlotte Sheedy Literary Agency as agent for the author.
Copyright © 1990, 2006, 2008, 2017 by Mary Oliver with permission of Bill Reichblum

No.1 from the Choral Suite, *It is Happiness*

The Summer Day

Mary Oliver (1935-2019)

Joan Szymko

Adagio ♩=72 *Pastoral*

The score is for a choral suite. The top part features a Flute line with a melodic line in 4/4 time, marked *mf* and *mp*, with triplets and a crescendo leading to *mf*. Below it are staves for Tenor and Baritone, which are mostly empty, indicating rests. The bottom part is for Piano, marked *Pastoral* and *Adagio* ♩=72. It features a harmonic accompaniment in 4/4 time, with dynamics *mp* and *p*, and a pedal point in the bass. The score includes time signature changes from 4/4 to 2/4 and back to 4/4. A *Ped.* marking is present in the piano part, and an asterisk (*) is at the end of the piece.

Copyright 1996, 2023 by Joan Szymko
"The Summer Day" by Mary Oliver

Reprinted by the permission of The Charlotte Sheedy Literary Agency as agent for the author.
Copyright © 1990, 2006, 2008, 2017 by Mary Oliver with permission of Bill Reichblum

5 **A** **Con moto** ♩=144

Fl.

T.

Bar.

B.

mf

Who made the world? Who made the swan, and the black bear?

5 **A** **Con moto** ♩=144

Pno.

mf

9

T.

Bar.

B.

mf

Who made the world? Who made the swan, and the black bear?

9

Pno.

12

Fl.

T.

Bar.

B.

Pno.

mf

Who made the world? _____ Who made the swan, and the black bear?

12

Fl.

T.

Bar.

B.

Pno.

B

15

mp

mf

f

Who made the world? _____ Who made the world? _____

Who made the world? _____ Who made the world? _____

Who made the world? _____ Who made the world? _____

Who made the black bear? _____ Who made the world? _____

15 **B**

Pno.

f

no ped.

18

Fl. *mf* *mp*

T. *mf*
8 Who made the grass - hop - per? _____

Bar. *mf*
Who made the grass - hop - per? _____

B. *mf*
Who made the grass - hop - per? _____

Pno. *mp*

21

Fl.

T. *f*
8 This grass - hop - per, I mean the

Bar. *f*
This grass - hop - per, I mean the

B. *f*
This grass - hop - per,

Pno. *f*

24 **C** *mf* *f* *mp*

T. *mf* *f* *mp*

Bar. *mf* *f* *mp* melody

B. *mp*

Pno. *mp* R.H.

one who has flung her-self_ out of the grass, the one who is eat-ing sug-ar out of my

one who has flung her-self_ out of the grass, the one who is eat-ing sug-ar out of my

the one who is eat-ing sug-ar out of my

27

Fl.

T. *mf*

Bar. *mf*

B. *mf*

Pno. *mf* *mp*

hand, who is mov-ing her jaws back and forth in-stead of up and down

hand, who is mov-ing her jaws back and forth in-stead of up and down

hand, mov-ing her jaws back and in-stead of up and down

THIS PAGE LEFT BLANK FOR
COPYRIGHT PROTECTION

39 **D**

Fl. *mp* *p* *mp* *mf*

T. *8*

Bar. *mp* *mf*

B. *mp* *mf*

Now she lifts her pale fore - arms and thor - ough ly wash - es her face.

Now she lifts her pale fore - arms and thor - ough ly wash es her face.

39 **D** *legato*

Pno. *mp*

ped. freely

45

Fl. *mf*

T. *8* *mf*

Bar. *mf*

B. *mf*

Now she snaps her wings o - pen, and floats a - way...

Now she snaps her wings o - pen, and floats a - way...

and floats a - way...

45

Pno.

Brightly

50 *mf*

Fl.

T.

Bar.

B.

Pno.

Flowing

54 **E** *mp*

Fl.

T.

Bar.

B.

p *mp* *mf*

Who made the world? Who made the swan, and the black bear?

54 **E** *Playfully*

Pno.

p *mp* *mf*

no ped.

58

Fl.

T.

Bar.

B.

Pno.

mf

Who made the world? Who made the swan, and the black bear?

mf

Who made the world?

58

Fl.

T.

Bar.

B.

Pno.

f

f *mf* *f*

Who made the world? Who made the swan, and the black bear?

f *mf* *f*

Who made the world? Who made the swan, and the black bear?

mf *f*

Who made the swan, and the black bear?

61

Fl.

T.

Bar.

B.

Pno.

f

f *mf* *f*

Who made the world? Who made the swan, and the black bear?

f *mf* *f*

Who made the world? Who made the swan, and the black bear?

mf *f*

Who made the swan, and the black bear?

61

Fl.

T.

Bar.

B.

Pno.

f

f *mf* *f*

Who made the world? Who made the swan, and the black bear?

f *mf* *f*

Who made the world? Who made the swan, and the black bear?

mf *f*

Who made the swan, and the black bear?

64

Fl.

T. *mf* *f*

Bar. *mf* *f*

B. *mf* *f*

Pno. *mf*

ped. freely

64

67

Fl. *mp* *mf*

T. *mf*

Bar. *mf*

B. *mf*

Pno. *mf*

Who made the world? _____ Who made the world? _____

Who made the world? _____ Who made the world? _____

Who made the black bear? _____ Who made the world? _____

Who made the grass-hop - per? _____

Who made the grass-hop - per? _____

Who made the grass-hop - per? _____

Who made the grass-hop - per? _____

THIS PAGE LEFT BLANK FOR
COPYRIGHT PROTECTION

94

Fl.

T.

Bar.

B.

Pno.

mp

p

p

melody

dolce leggiero

mp

p

I don't know ex-

I don't know ex-

99

Fl.

T.

Bar.

B.

Pno.

mp

p

mp

p

act-ly what a prayer is.

I don't know ex-

I don't know ex-

I don't know ex - act - ly what a prayer

103

Fl.

T.

Bar.

B.

Pno.

act - ly what a prayer is. I don't know ex - act - ly what

act - ly what a prayer is. I don't know ex - act - ly what

is. I don't know ex - act - ly, I don't know ex - act - ly what

103

107

Fl.

T.

Bar.

B.

Pno.

a prayer is.

a prayer is.

a prayer is.

107

111 **H**

Fl. *mf*

T. *mf*

Bar. *mf*

B. *mf*

Pno. *mf*

116 **H**

Fl. *mp*

T. *mp*

Bar. *mp* *mf*

B. *mp*

Pno. *mp*

I do know how to pay at - ten - tion,

how to fall down in - to grass

how to kneel down in the

how to fall down in - to grass

THIS PAGE LEFT BLANK FOR
COPYRIGHT PROTECTION

130

Fl.

T. *mp* which is what I have been do-ing all day. *mp*

Bar. *mp* which is what I have been do-ing all day.

B. *p* which is what I have been do-ing all day. *mp*

Pno. *mp*

134

Fl.

T. *mf* what *f*

Bar. *mf* what else should I have *f*

B. *mf* Tell me, what else should I have done? *f*

Pno. *f* *mp* *p*

I Determined

138 rit.

Fl.

T. *mf*

Bar. *mf* *f* *mf*

B. *f* *mf*

Pno.

142 rit.

Fl. *Meno mosso*

T. *f* *mp* *p*

Bar. *mp* *p*

B. *mp* *p*

Pno. *pp* *Meno mosso*

147 **Più mosso** $\text{♩} = 120$ **accel.**

Fl. *mf* *f*

T. $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{2}{2}$ $\frac{3}{4}$

Bar. $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{2}{2}$ $\frac{3}{4}$

B. $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{2}{2}$ $\frac{3}{4}$

147 **Più mosso** $\text{♩} = 120$ **accel.**

Pno. *mf* *f*

152 **J** **Con moto** $\text{♩} = 72$

Fl. *f*

T. *f*
Tell me, what is it you plan to do,

Bar. *f*
Tell me, what is it you plan to do,

B. *f*
Tell me, what is it you plan to do,

152 **J** **Con moto** $\text{♩} = 72$

Pno. *f*

155

Fl. *f*

T.
what is it you plan to do With your one wild and pre - cious

Bar.
what is it you plan to do With your one wild and pre - cious

B.
what is it you plan to do With your one wild and pre - cious

155

Pno.

158

Fl. *ff*

T.
life?

Bar.
life?

B.
life?

158

Pno. *ff*