



## Text and Translation

When my father said he was leaving,  
I ran with my sister to the brook  
behind our grandparents' house.

We held each other as we wept,  
innocence spilling from our tiny eyes.

She went back before me  
to be with our mother.  
I stayed a while longer and sat  
in the silence of my final childish moments.

Who would teach me to be strong?  
Who would share their wisdom?  
Who would pick me up when I fall down?

I will build my own refuge.  
I will seek my own teachers.  
I will be my own hero.

I will be the man that I needed  
when I was just a boy.

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## From the Composer

*when I was just a boy* is the most deeply personal piece I have ever written. Unfortunately, like so many other children, my father was not present in any kind of meaningful way during my formative years. So many of us carry the burden of having to break the cycle of absence and abuse. It is my sincerest hope that this music might have a meaningful impact on others who have had similar experiences. To achieve this goal, the piece must be sung with the deep earnestness of your inner child. The tempo should not be strict – it can surge ahead and relax at the discretion of the performers/director. The tenor soloist is encouraged to step forward from the ensemble when they sing, ensuring that they are heard prominently over the ensemble. May all who encounter this music, from the audience or the ensemble, find strength, hope, and healing.

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## Biography

Isaac Lovdahl is an award-winning composer, conductor, educator, and bass-baritone vocalist who serves as Director of Choral Activities at Bemidji State University and Artistic Director of the Bemidji Chorale. His music has been described as "a revelation" and "remarkable" (*The American Prize*), and is increasingly gaining traction throughout the choral music world. In recent years, Isaac has received award recognition, commissions, and premieres from Cantus, the Yale Glee Club, The Singers - Minnesota Choral Artists, the Young New Yorkers' Chorus, the Cambridge Chamber Singers, Choral Arts Initiative, the Festival of New American Music, the Ithaca College Choral Composition Festival, Minneapolis SongSLAM, and the North Dakota Music Teachers Association in conjunction with the Music Teachers National Association, among others. To learn more, please visit [isaaclovdahl.com](http://isaaclovdahl.com).

CANTUS-012

# when I was just a boy

TTBB a cappella

music and lyrics by  
Isaac Lovdahl

**Rubato; molto espressivo** (♩ = 53) *mf*

The score is for a vocal ensemble (TTBB) and piano. It is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The tempo is marked 'Rubato; molto espressivo' with a quarter note equal to 53 beats per minute. The dynamics range from *mf* (mezzo-forte) to *pp* (pianissimo). The lyrics are: 'said he was leav - ing, When my fath - - er said, I ran with my sis - ter'. The piano part features a simple accompaniment with some triplet figures.

Tenor Solo: *mf* said he was leav - ing,

Tenor 1: *mp* → *mf* When my fath - - er said, *mp* I ran with my sis - ter

Tenor 2: *mp* → *mf* When my fath - - er said, *pp* I ran with my

Baritone: *mp* → *mf* When my fath - - er said,

Bass: *mp* → *mf* When my fath - - er said,

Piano

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when I was just a boy

5

T1  
to the brook be - hind our grand - par - ents' house. We held each oth - er,

T2  
sis - ter. We held each oth - er,

B  
We held each oth - er,

B  
We held each oth - er,

Pno.

10

T1  
we held each oth - er as we wept,

T2  
we held each oth - er as we wept, dim.

B  
we held each oth - er as we wept,

B  
we held each oth - er as we wept,

Pno.

14 **A** when I was just a boy **B** *mf*

Solo She went back be - fore me to

T 1 *p* in - no - cence spill - ing from our tin - y eyes. [*m*] *mp*

T 2 *p* in - no - cence spill - ing from our tin - y eyes. [*m*] *mp*

B *p* in - no - cence spill - ing from our tin - y eyes. [*m*] *mp*

B *p* in - no - cence spill - ing from our tin - y eyes. [*m*] *mp*

Pno.

---

18

Solo be with our moth - er. \_\_\_\_\_

T 1 *mp* I stayed a while long - er and sat in the si - lence,

T 2 *mp* I stayed a while long - er and sat in the si - lence,

B *mp* I stayed a while long - er and sat in the si - lence, sat

B *mp* I stayed a while long - er and sat in the si - lence,

Pno.

3 3

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Cantus VOCAL ENSEMBLE

when I was just a boy

23

T 1 sat in the si - lence, in the si - lence.

T 2 sat in the si - lence, in the si - lence.

B in the si - lence of my fin - al child - ish mom - ments. [m]

B sat in the si - lence of my fin - al child - ish mom - ments. [m]

Pno.

27

T 1 *p* Who would teach me to be strong? [r]

T 2 *p* Who would teach me to be strong? [r]

B *p* Who would teach me to be

B

Pno.

when I was just a boy

30

*mf*

T 1 Who would pick me up when I fall

*mf*

T 2 Who would pick me up when I fall

*mf*

B strong? [1] Who would pick me up when I fall

*p*

*mf*

B Who would share their wis - - dom? [m] Who would pick me up when I fall

Pno.

34

*p sub.* C ♩ = c. 97

T 1 down? [m]

*p sub.*

T 2 down? [m]

*p sub.* *mp*

B down? [m] I will build, I will build,

*p sub.* *mp*

B down? [m] I will build, I will build,

Pno.



45 when I was just a boy *f*

Solo  
 build, \_\_\_\_\_ I \_\_\_\_\_

T 1  
 I will seek my own, I will seek my own, I will seek my own,

T 2  
 teach - ers, my own, teach - ers, my own, teach - ers, my own.

B  
 I will seek, I will seek, I will seek,

B  
 I will seek, I will seek, I will seek,

Pno.

---

48

Solo  
 \_\_\_\_\_ will seek, \_\_\_\_\_ I \_\_\_\_\_ will be \_\_\_\_\_

T 1  
 I will seek my own, I will be my own, I will be my own, I will be my

T 2  
 teach - ers, my own, teach - ers, my own her o, I \_\_\_\_\_ will be my

B  
 I will seek, I will be, I will be, I will be my

B  
 I will seek, I will be, I will be, I will be my

Pno.

when I was just a boy

52 **D** **E** ♩ = c. 53 *mf*

Solo  
my own her - - o. man that I

T 1  
own her - - o. I will be the man [n]

T 2  
own her - - o. I will be the man [n]

B  
own her - - o. I will be the man [n]

B  
own her - - o. I will be the man [n]

Pno.

*ff*, *mp*, *mf*

58 **F**

Solo  
need - ed

T 1  
when I was just a boy. [m]

T 2  
when I was just a boy. [m]

B  
when I was just a boy. [m]

B  
when I was just a boy. [m]

Pno.

*mp*, *p*

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