

The Sun is Love, a song cycle by Gwyneth Walker

by

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B.M.E., Washburn University, 2020

A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF MUSIC

School of Music, Theatre, and Dance
College of Arts and Sciences

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2023

Approved by:

Major Professor
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Abstract

Composers have found depth and meaning in poetry for years. They hear metrical and dynamic shaping in the delivery of prose with one writer sharing that, “Of him who is giving a musical setting to a piece of verse it is demanded also that he shall clothe the poem in a fitting musical garb, adequately express the sense of the words, reproduce the atmosphere, and reveal the hidden meaning (if the poem have any).”¹. Gwyneth Walker has created this style of composition in *The Sun is Love*, which represents themes of nature with spiritual undertones. This document will focus on the compositional practices of Gwyneth Walker represented within the song cycle, *The Sun is Love*. These include text painting based on the naturalistic and spiritual qualities of the text and how she uses sound to take the audience on an aural journey. The first chapter is dedicated to describing the life and compositional practices of Gwyneth Walker to provide a foundation from which to analyze her works. Chapters 2-7 will focus on each individual movement of *The Sun is Love* using the following framework to deliver the content: song analysis, pedagogical considerations, poetic analysis. In the final chapter, I will share tips for future performers, ideas for textual analysis, and trends in story delivery within Walker’s works. Finally, I will offer my own thoughts on this process, what I have learned about the research and pedagogical process, and how this experience has changed me as a teacher, musician, and performer.

¹ (Oliphant, E. H. C. 1922. “Poetry and the Composer.” *The Musical Quarterly* 8 (2): 227–41.).

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Chapter 1 - Gwyneth Walker

*Music can speak the language of the soul. And it can do so with the strength of the logical mind as its agent. This is the power of music.*²

Gwyneth Walker (March 22, 1947) grew up in New Canaan, Connecticut in a family that did not necessarily identify as overly musical. Her parents, John and Adele, provided a great home and both had full time jobs as a scientist and stay-at-home parent, respectively. Gwyneth began to demonstrate her musical abilities when she was just two years old. As the anecdote is told by Walker herself, she heard her sister practicing the piano for her upcoming lesson when the young Gwyneth crawled up onto the piano bench and performed the patterns her sister practiced by ear. This event set in motion her journey in music and provided the foundation for the composing career that lay ahead.

Early Life

Walker's creative urges would emerge during her piano lessons at the age of 5.³ She began to dislike piano lessons because of the box that she felt entrapped in. The rules of performance and interpreting that which was on the page halted Walker from being able to express herself through the music. In response, Walker would often compose her own excerpts in response to those that she practiced. This allowed her creative side to have an outlet during her lessons. One way she allowed her creativity to flourish was to rewrite many of her etudes because she heard them differently than they were written in the book. Over the first month, the piano teacher did not see a need for lessons and that is when Walker began her compositional journey.

² "Gwyneth Walker: Letters and Replies," Gwyneth Walker- Composer, accessed October 16, 2021, <https://www.gwynethwalker.com/letrep.html>.

³ Ibid.

At the age of 6 she organized her friends to play a song she had composed. Before going to recess they would play the composition. This was just the start of her compositional career. She continued to compose through her adolescent years. She developed her compositional style, and her way of life was a huge influence on her compositions. Walker states that her family wasn't musically inclined, but her mother was a wonderful harmonizer. When her mother was in a nursing home, Walker would take her guitar and play for her mother. This is where she discovered her mother's ability to harmonize. Her mother would sing harmonies that most people wouldn't think to sing. Walker states that she believes that is where some of her musical gifts derived from.

One characteristic of her family that resonates most is her religious foundation. Her family had a history of Quakers dating back many years. Walker's mother was not particularly religious, so she didn't find out about this heritage until she had visited a Quaker church on a field trip and felt drawn to the meeting and the lifestyle. She went home and told her mother who informed her that she had many ancestors that followed the Quaker religion. The way she views her writing and some of the music she chooses is based on her religion. Quakers do not have a history of music in their services, but they still enjoy music. She uses the Quaker's egalitarian lifestyle as a way to help her decisions on what she will write. For example, if she thinks that she has written too much for orchestra she will transfer her ideas to choral, by doing this she is giving all of her creativity equally to all things she writes. She states that if she is commissioned to write for a professional orchestra and an elementary choir, she gives both compositions the same attention, instead of pouring her creative energy into only one. This way of thinking is also used to help decide which pieces she will go see premiere. If they are both to premiere the same day, she will go to the one that asked her first, not the one that is more prestigious. Walker was

never deterred away from composition which is a male dominated field. Her Quaker beliefs strengthen her resilience. Quakers believe that all sexes are equal, because of this she never thought that she as a woman shouldn't be a composer.

Academic Life

Gwyneth Walker grew up without much musical education outside of the music classes she had as a public-school student. While she didn't take theory lessons until she was more experienced as a musician, she often composed music in her own time using her own unique sounds and tendencies prior to studying with her mentors. Given the disjunct nature of her own musical pathway, Walker did not realize that majoring in music was an option and opted to start her collegiate career as a science major. However, this quickly gave way to majoring in music once she enrolled in her first music courses. Taking these initial courses proved seismic in that she immediately sought out the head of the music program at Brown University and enrolled in all the music classes available to her. The head of the music school wanted to make sure Gwyneth would be successful in these classes, so he asked her a few advanced theory questions. She answered all the questions correctly and was allowed to skip all the theory course and enrolled immediately into composition classes. Due to skipping all theory courses, Walker has stated that she had to teach herself a lot of things because the classes were not needed for her. Walker had little experience with composition prior to her initial courses in theory while studying music at Brown University. However, she did have a theory teacher while in high

school because a friend of hers shared that she took theory classes and Gwyneth thought that sounded appealing and wanted to attain those same experiences.⁴

After graduating from Brown (B.A. in music composition, 1968)⁵, Walker continued her education at Hartt School of Music at the University of Hartford where she obtained her M.M. in music composition, 1970 and D.M.A. in music composition in 1976. As a newly minted D.M.A. graduate, she applied for and was appointed to an Assistant Professor position at Oberlin College Conservatory of Music where she taught composition. Walker found that time for creativity and composition remained limited due to several teaching and service duties. As a result, she left the university in 1982 and started composing full-time at her home in Connecticut. To maintain some voice within the process, Walker composes solely on commission and favors topics in which she maintains a strong passion: religion, nature, and women rights.

Inspiration and Source Materials

Drawing inspiration from religion is critical in Walker's compositions. While religious undertones are evident, sacred music does not influence her composing. Due to her Quaker upbringing Walker's religious experiences growing up did not include a great deal of music. Ironically, this demonstrates little to no impact in her compositional style since she started composing so early in her life. However, she demonstrates very deep and meaningful connections to the content which is directly aligned with her religious upbringing. Her piece "*Come Life, Shaker Life*" is a great example of Walker using her Quaker background and

⁴ "Gwyneth Walker: Letters and Replies," Gwyneth Walker- Composer, accessed October 16, 2021, <https://www.gwynethwalker.com/letrep.html>.

⁵ Gwyneth Walker, interviewed by Music students of Brown University, December 5, 1997, transcript, Brown University Music Department.

religion in her text and musical writing. In the piece it includes clapping, dancing, and counterpoint rounds. All these things are typical of Quaker activities and musical traditions. She states that “*Come Life, Shaker Life!* is inspired by the Shaker joy of living: song, dance, faith, humor, playfulness, prayer and celebration. Life then. Life now.”⁶ She also finds inspiration through hymns from other denominations and uses those texts and melodies as content for her own musical fulfillment. She once wrote that *I Thank you God* by E.E. cummings served as “a very BIG ‘thank you’ to God for creating this world and for giving us the faith to overcome any obstacles in our lives”.⁷ This quote exemplifies the love and devotion she has for her religion.

As with religion, Walker is focused on finding powerful source material. She shares that each poem must have an impact on her and she spends a great deal of time searching for good and usable poems - they must be moving and interesting. As she researches the poem, she examines the musical setting that will elicit the tone and emotions envisioned by the author. This is directly followed by capturing this through her own lens and how the poem makes her feel and specifically what the words are saying to her. Walker tries to avoid esoteric qualities and wants her compositions to remain clear and focused. She wants to make it evident what is happening in the text using common musical language. Her works allow the performers to tell the story in their own way while remaining true to the music. In return, the performer must be vigilant in researching the poetry to unlock the meaning behind each song included in the cycle.⁸

⁶ Gwyneth Walker, “Come Life, Shaker Life!,” last modified 2002, <https://www.gwynethwalker.com/comelife.html>.

⁷ “Gwyneth Walker: Letters and Replies,” Gwyneth Walker- Composer, accessed October 16, 2021, <https://www.gwynethwalker.com/letrep.html>.

⁸ *Profile*, season 9, episode 913, “Gwyneth Walker,” directed by Neil Hilt, featuring Gwyneth Walker and Fran Stoddard, aired May 9, 2010, in broadcast syndication, PBS.

Poems serve as a primary source of text for many of Walker's works. Over the years, she has demonstrated a consistent connection with several poets throughout her compositional career. Along with E. E. Cummings, she has gained inspiration through the writings of Lucille Clifton, Langston Hughes, William Butler Yeats, and Jelaluddin Rumi.

Walker has written many song cycles based on famous poems but is always looking for new American poets. She spends a lot of time searching for the right poems. She has stated that she spends many hours in the library reading poetry and looking for works that will fit her Quaker outlook on life.⁹ If a new poet is mentioned in a magazine, newspaper, or on TV, she always takes an interest. This is exactly the case with May Swenson. She happened upon May's obituary in the newspaper where they had included a few lines of her poetry. Walker was drawn to her poems and even attended her memorial service and listened to Swenson's friends read her poetry and she fell in love with her writing. The poetry she heard at Swenson's funeral is inspiration for many of Walker's works including "I will be Earth," "Sportsongs," "Songs for Women's voice," and "Mornings Innocent."

While Walker is always looking for new poetry, the poetry she does choose must be accessible to her and her audience. She will never compose texts that have profanity but enjoys those with wit. The poems she selects express a specific personality and through her musical compositions, this personality shines through the music. In solo vocal pieces, Walker is very specific about character and writes directions in her music for acting and performing that the singer should follow. She has stated that she loves when a performer "gives it their all" while

⁹ Ken Keuffel, "A Prolific Poet in Music," *The Winston-Salem Journal*, February 20, 2005, accessed December 9, 2021,

<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A128960469/ITOF?u=ksu&sid=bookmark-ITOF&xid=f04d9062>

performing. Since her pieces have a variety of topics, it gives the performer a chance to use acting skills and give the audience a full story.

Walker started composing at such an early age that she doesn't believe that her composition style was influenced by composers of the past. She has not been easily influenced by external factors or composers. Walker is quoted as saying “My background as a folk musician is an influence. I love musicians like James Taylor, Joni Mitchell, Judy Collins, and the Beatles. I am eclectic. “Influenced by” would not be relevant, since I started composing when I was two. Surely, I borrow sounds of what is around me, but I do not hear a particular composer and decide I need to write like that person”.¹⁰

Analytic process

Walker has given specific information about how she combines her compositional style with the poetry she writes. She finds a way to allow the piano to also have a part in telling the story. This is relevant in her piece “I Will be Earth” from the song cycle *Mornings Innocent*. In one of her letters, she writes about how the piano and the voice are at odds with each other, creating an unsteadiness that represents the ungrounded feeling of falling in love. This becomes evident when looking at the text “How be steady earth that now a flood”.¹¹ Understanding the reasoning behind the unsteady rhythm makes the text even more prevalent. With that information the performer can take the unsteadiness of the song and make it part of their characterization. To begin composing a piece like this, Walker stated that when she finds a poem, she looks for the central image, then works on a form that lets the music speak for the poem. With a deep

¹⁰ Gwyneth Walker and Gene Brooks, “An Interview with Gwyneth Walker,” *The Choral Journal* 39, no.7 (1999): 26.

¹¹ Gwyneth Walker, *Mornings Innocent: For High Voice and Piano* (Boston, Massachusetts: ECS Publishing, 1993)

understanding of the poem and clear idea of the message, the performer can perform the piece at the level at which Walker intended.

In the following chapters I will be taking an in-depth look into the poetry, composition, and the musical aspects that personify the poetry from each song of Gwyneth Walker's *The Sun is Love* song cycle.

The song cycle represents themes of nature with spiritual undertones. This will be relevant throughout the poems Walker has chosen to set. I will be taking a deeper look into the poetry of each song in the cycle and how Walker uses the text to create a “musical language” to emphasize the meaning. I will give performance tips for future performers and ideas for what to look for in communicating the text to an audience.

Chapter 2 - The Sun is Love

History of Composition

The *Sun is Love* is a song cycle for soprano voice, and piano. It was written for Jamie Shaak as a wedding gift to her husband and premiered at their wedding in Randolph, Vermont on September 28, 2002. The cycle includes six songs based on texts by Jeladuddin Rumi. The songs are: “Circling the Sun,” “Quietness,” “Flirtation: Light and Wine and Pomegranate Flowers,” “The Sunrise Ruby,” “Dualities: insomnia, meetings, mirrors, stones,” and finally “A Waterbird.” The cycle is through composed and lasts around 20 minutes. Shaak helped choose one of the texts used in cycle, “Lovers don’t finally meet somewhere. They’re in each other all along.” This text was chosen by Shaak to honor her father, who admired the poetry of Rumi. Walker selected the remaining texts for the work. Rumi’s extensive catalog of poetry gave Walker many options from which to choose.

Poet Background and Influence

Jalāl al-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī was a popular Persian poet and mystic, known for writing poems about love, religion, and passion. He often wrote about the masteries of human desire and the ecstasy of love.¹² Rumi was born September 30, 1207, in Balkh, Persia which is modern day Afghanistan. His father, Bahā’ al-Dīn, was a known mystical theologian, author, and teacher.¹³ The family left Balkh in 1218 in fear of the Mongolian invasion and settled in Anatolia, which was a peaceful region under the leadership of the Turkish Seljuq Dynasty. They lived in the city

¹² “Rumi’s Poetry,” Facts and Details, September 2018, <https://factsanddetails.com/world/cat55/sub395/entry-5939.html>.

¹³ Annamarie Schimmel, “Rumi, Sufi mystic and poet,” last modified December 13, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Rumi>.

Laranda (present day Karaman) for most of Rumi's young adult life. After Rumi's mother died, their family was called to Konya. While in Konya, Bahā' al-Dīn, taught at the madrasahs (religious school). During this time Rumi also received an education in traditional religious studies. He studied in Aleppo and Damascus. When he returned to Konya, he was recognized as a mufti, an expert in Islamic law. After completing his studies, Rumi succeeded his father in this position after his death in 1231. While teaching, Rumi met one of his father's disciples, Burhān al-Dīn Muḥaqqiq. Burhān became a massive influence on Rumi and his spiritual formation. While Burhān was an influential part of preparing Rumi to be a mystic, he wasn't the only spiritual influence in the poet's life.

On November 29, 1244, Rumi met Shams al-Din Mohammad.¹⁴ It is said that he met Shams while walking the streets of Konya. Shams was a dervish holy man and very devoted to his teaching. In Sham's autobiography *"Me and Rumi"*, he states that he considers his students to be God's saints.¹⁵ Rumi spent months at a time studying and learning from Shams and they became very close. In the Shahram Shivra book, Rumi's untold story, he states that Rumi and Shams spent up to six months alone together. Rumi began neglecting his time with his own disciples and was solely focusing on his studies with Shams. Rumors began to come about that their relationship was more than that of teacher and disciple and contained a sexual element. Shams left Rumi after this period together but his spiritual teachings remained present in Rumi's life.¹⁶ There was speculation about why Shams left and what happened to him. Some believed he was killed due to "religious blasphemy" and another states that Shams left Rumi to "become the

¹⁴ Delaney James, "Rumi: The Homoerotic Sufi Saint," *Cross Currents* 69, no. 4 (December 2019): 365–84.

¹⁵ Rūmī Jalāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad and William C. Chittick, *Me and Rumi the Autobiography of Shams-I Tabrizi* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2004).

¹⁶ Delaney James, "Rumi: The Homoerotic Sufi Saint," *Cross Currents* 69, no. 4 (December 2019): 365–84.

wild, wandering bird he was”.¹⁷ Rumi refused these rumors for forty days, and after forty days had passed he accepted that Shams was dead. He mourned his spiritual guide by dressing in black for the remainder of his life.¹⁸

After the death of Shams, Rumi began writing poetry. His most influential works include the *Masnavi*, a six-volume poem, and *Dīwān-e Shams-e Tabrīzī* (The collected poetry of Shams). His works cover the topics of love, loss, and religion and were quite extensive. The *Diwani* is over 40,000 verses and his other works are around that magnitude also. Rumi wrote *Dīwān-e Shams* to show the love and admiration he had for Shams. He even adopted “Shams” as his pen name at the end of his lyrical poems.¹⁹

While love is a main topic in Rumi's poetry, themes of longing and loss are also prevalent. Coleman Barks, poet and Rumi translator, has translated Rumi's works so that his thoughts on love can be universally enjoyed. Barks has been translating Rumi's works since 1976 and has translated at least a dozen volumes in over 40 years.²⁰ The use of the Barks translations of Rumi's passionate poetry has allowed Gwyneth Walker to create the focus piece of this research, *The Sun is Love*.

¹⁷ Brad Gooch, *Rumi's Secret: The Life of the Sufi Poet of Love* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2018).

¹⁸ Delaney James, “Rumi: The Homoerotic Sufi Saint,” *Cross Currents* 69, no. 4 (December 2019): 365–84.

¹⁹ Annamarie Schimmel, “Rumi, Sufi mystic and poet,” last modified December 13, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Rumi>.

²⁰ “Coleman Barks and Rumi,” Coleman Barks, accessed January 31, 2022, <https://www.colemanbarks.com/>.

Chapter 3 - Circling the Sun

The first song, “Circling the Sun,” introduces the main topic of the cycle. Walker explains in her notes at the beginning of the cycle stating, “The opening song, “Circling the Sun,” introduces the title phrase of *The Sun is Love* along with the image of the lover as a “speck circling the sun.” This song is intended to draw the listener into the world of romance which is central to Rumi's writings. Sacredness and love.”.²¹

Circling the Sun

The sun is love. The lover,
a speck circling the sun.
A Spring wind moves to dance
any branch that isn't dead.
Something opens our wings.
Something makes boredom and hurt disappear.
Someone fills the cup in front of us.
We taste only sacredness.
Held like this, to draw in milk,
no will, tasting clouds of milk,
never so content.
I stand up and this one of me
turns into a hundred of me.
They say I circle around you.
Nonsense. I circle around me.

²¹ Gwyneth Walker, *The Sun is Love: For High Voice and Piano* (Boston, Massachusetts: ECS Publishing, 2003)

Song Analysis

The song has an eight-bar piano introduction. Once the voice enters, four and eight bar phrases are used throughout the piece. The A section follows this introduction. While the song moves between four-bar or eight bar phrases, five themes are introduced. These themes bring different tonality, cadences, and rhythmic material. Walker wrote the song to switch between major and minor. In doing this she has added another layer of text and depth into her composing. The song begins in G major. In this introduction, the piano is utilizing a circling motion of triplets, Walker's signature accompaniment style in this song cycle. This pattern holds significance with this piece as it is part of the story. The circular motion represents never ending love. The triplet pattern is always prevalent until section D.



Figure 3.1. Gwyneth Walker, "Circling the Sun," mm. 1-7.

The first theme is found at the beginning of the piece at measure 8 and is identified by the text “The Sun is Love”.²² This is the only theme that repeats. It returns at measure 28 and then again at the end of the song at measure 56, where repeats the same text and triplet pattern. The B Theme begins in measure 19, with a half-cadence and a new text and rhythmic pattern. Walker uses half cadences and deceptive cadences throughout the piece to transition to the next theme. These cadences are used to modulate to the next key signature. She uses a half cadence to move from G major in the first theme to A minor. The key changes happen quickly in the music, which keeps the listener engaged. She returns to the original key whenever she reiterates Theme A. The piano begins the next section. Using four bar phrasing and arpeggiation of chords, the song transitions back to G major with a four bar reentrance of Theme A.

Theme C is introduced in measure 33, and returns to A minor. Four bar phrases are used during this section which is described by Walker as “hushed and magical” and uses stacked block chords. Because of this, the chords are very thick, which can blur the key. Walker uses the vocal line to keep the key stable. A triplet pattern in the vocal line allows for a slow recitative to be demonstrated. The material transition to Eb Major. Walker emphasizes this key by using arpeggiation in the piano. The arpeggiation ends on C minor, the relative minor of Eb major.

Theme D follows immediately after. It has the same triplet accompaniment as section A and B but is in Eb major and the vocal line presents different material. The line moves in a slower, quasi recitative then previous melodies. The triplet pattern is then used in the vocal line

²² Gwyneth Walker, *The Sun is Love: For High Voice and Piano* (Boston, Massachusetts: ECS Publishing, 2003), 1, m. 8-9.

instead of piano. Walker directs the voice to sing softly in a “hushed, magical”²³ tone. The singer can use these directions to build the story line. Once the recitative section has completed, the lyric section return to *a tempo* with the rolling triplet accompaniment. With the use of the rolling triplets, the tonality transitions smoothly into Theme E, which is a recitative. During Theme E, the piano is less prominent. Chords are used in a I-V-I pattern. Following Theme E, we have a small transitional section in the piano. Walker uses a perfect authentic cadence to return to G major in Theme A, the same material used to transition back to Theme A. It has the same purpose here to helps transition to the final rendition of Theme A. To end the song, there is a sustained an A pitch in the vocal line, as well as in piano. This technically does not fit the key signature but is used as a transition into the next piece, Quietness.

Pedagogical Considerations

When learning a piece of music it is important to understand the phrasing. Since the text can be difficult to decipher, Walker has given rehearsal letters to help identify sections of the song. As the entrance points can be tricky because of the triplets in the piano, when listening for your entrance into letter A, listen for the quarter note pattern that is in the bass line in the piano. This will help to know when it is time to enter the song. Because of the triplet motion that Walker has used throughout the song, it helps shape the phrase.

²³ Gwyneth Walker, *The Sun is Love: For High Voice and Piano* (Boston, Massachusetts: ECS Publishing, 2003), 3, m. 33.

poco Ped., gradually add more until m. 9

4 *cresc.* *sim.*

8 **A** *f with warmth and exuberance*
The sun is love.

(cresc.) *f* 3 3 3 3

Figure 3.2. Gwyneth Walker, “Circling the Sun,” mm. 4-11.

Walker has also included triplet patterns in the vocal line. Measure 30 is an example of these triplets. These can be used as a warmup for the voice, when preparing to sing this cycle.

27 **C** *f*
The sun is love, love.

31 *rit.* **D** *Slower, quasi recitative hushed, magical* *p* 3

Figure 3.3. Gwyneth Walker, “Circling the Sun,” mm. 27-33.

During the slower quasi-recitative sections of the song, it is important to give each note the space and vibrancy it needs. Recitative is known for progressing the storyline. Walkers' use of recitative achieves the same goal. It is imperative that the vocalist understands the meaning of the text they are singing. This aids both singer and the audience know where the storyline is moving.

Walker uses symbolism in the music to represent themes in the text. She has included many circling triplet patterns. They are heard when singing the words "love" and "circling". The symbolism behind this is to represent the circle pattern as never ending, the relationship between the lovers. There are also many staccato markings throughout the music, both in the vocal line and the piano. This represent the "speck" that is mentioned in the beginning of the text. Where it is described as the lover being a speck circling the sun.

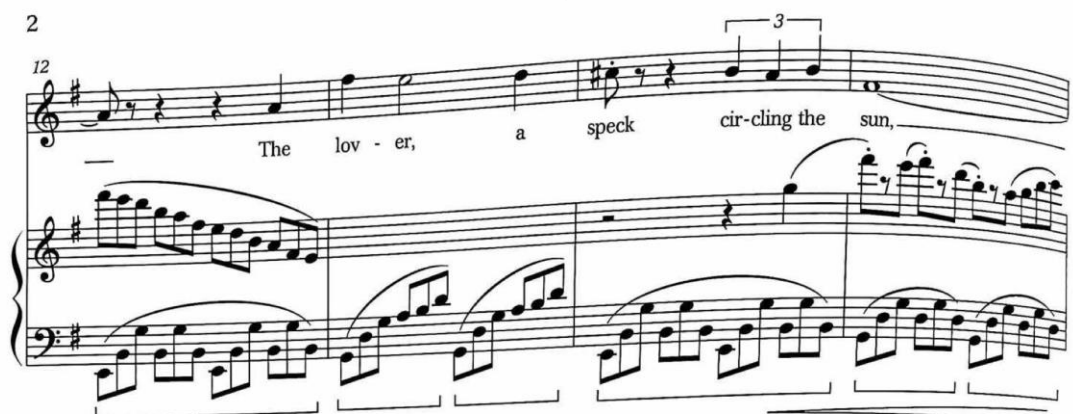


Figure 3.4. Gwyneth Walker, "Circling the Sun," mm. 12-15.

It is also apparent in measure 61- 62. The voice is singing "la" on a staccato and followed by a circling triplet motion, which pulls both ideas together.

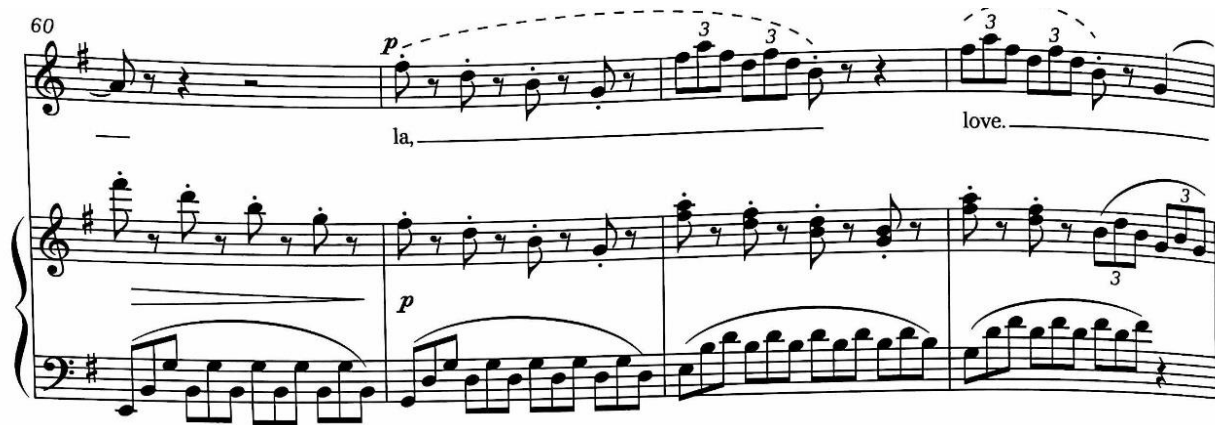


Figure 3.5 Gwyneth Walker, “Circling the Sun,” mm. 60-64.

Poetic Analysis

When Walker was choosing poetry for this cycle, Jamie Shaak gave her the book *The Essential Rumi*, which contained thousands of Rumi’s poems. Walker selected multiple poems to create song texts. When deciphering the meaning of the text it is important to understand the context of Rumi and how and why his poetry was written. With that knowledge, I provide my own interpretation of the text below. I believe this allowed me to give me a better performance of this song.

The sun is love. The lover, a speck circling the sun.

The sun represents love and love is bigger than us. We are always circling looking for love.

A Spring wind moves to dance any branch that isn’t dead.

love will try to wake the people who feel nothing and bring them back

Something opens our wings. Something makes boredom and hurt disappear.

Feeling love opens us up and makes us become alive again and bring us joy

Someone fills the cup in front of us. We taste only sacredness.

Someone fills our lives with love, and it makes us feel only joy and thankful to God for it

Held like this, to draw in milk, no will, tasting clouds of milk, never so content.

We are held like when we were children. Feeling the love and content we felt when full as a child in our mothers' arms

I stand up and this one of me turns into a hundred of me.

With the strength of this newfound love. I have the strength of a hundred of me.

They say I circle around you.

People think I need your love to be strong and content

Nonsense. I circle around me.

That's not true. Through your love I have learned to love myself and now I am embodying love.

By Through Coleman Barks translations and separating these text into separate phrase groupings, I was better able to understand each phrase.

Chapter 4 - Quietness

With a duration of 1 minute and 45 seconds, “Quietness” is the shortest song of the cycle. Within that short period of time, Walker advances the story and gives more insight into the characteristic of the lover (singer). Walker states that this piece “is a brief reflection of the letting go (dying) of the self in surrender to love, and to the new self which begins "on the other side.".”²⁴

Song Analysis

The song begins in the key of A minor. This is a direct transition from the final note of “Circling the Sun”, which ended on an A4. The voice begins, opening the song on a piano A4, with the use of the two-bar phrasing. Walker directs the vocalist to enter in slowly and gently. The vocalist continues unaccompanied for five measures after which, the piano enters on a descending four note pattern and strikes a V of ii chord. This chord pushes the musical material forward until an ascending scale is reached at measure ten which projects the song into the A section. Measures 7-12 accelerates in tempo to the next section. Sustained chords in the piano allow the singer to control the acceleration, guided by the text. Once the singer has set the accelerated pace, the piano takes over in pushing the tempo starting measure 10. With this accelerando, a small climax in the musical material breaks on an F5 in measure 12. This is the start of the A section.

In the A section, the piano has staccato quarter notes that alternate between a Bb major chord and C major chord. In Measure 13, is the beginning of the next thematic material. The

²⁴ Gwyneth Walker, *The Sun is Love: For High Voice and Piano* (Boston, Massachusetts: ECS Publishing, 2003)

piano has staccato quarter notes in the left hand with a small triplet pattern on almost every fourth beat. This pattern is used until section B begins.

The musical score for Gwyneth Walker's "Quietness" (measures 13-20) is presented in two systems. The first system (measures 13-16) shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The piano part features staccato quarter notes in the left hand and a right hand with a triplet pattern on every fourth beat. The vocal line includes lyrics: "wall. Es - cape. Es - cape. Walk out like some-one". The second system (measures 17-20) continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The piano part continues with the same staccato quarter notes in the left hand and the triplet pattern in the right hand. The vocal line includes lyrics: "sud-den-ly born in-to col-or. Do it now. You're co-vered with thick".

Figure 4.1. Gwyneth Walker, "Quietness," mm. 13-20.

The B sections is mostly the voice with sparse arpeggiated and sustained chords in the piano. This pattern continues until measure 24, which brings back the circling triplet pattern that was used during the first song "Circling the Sun".

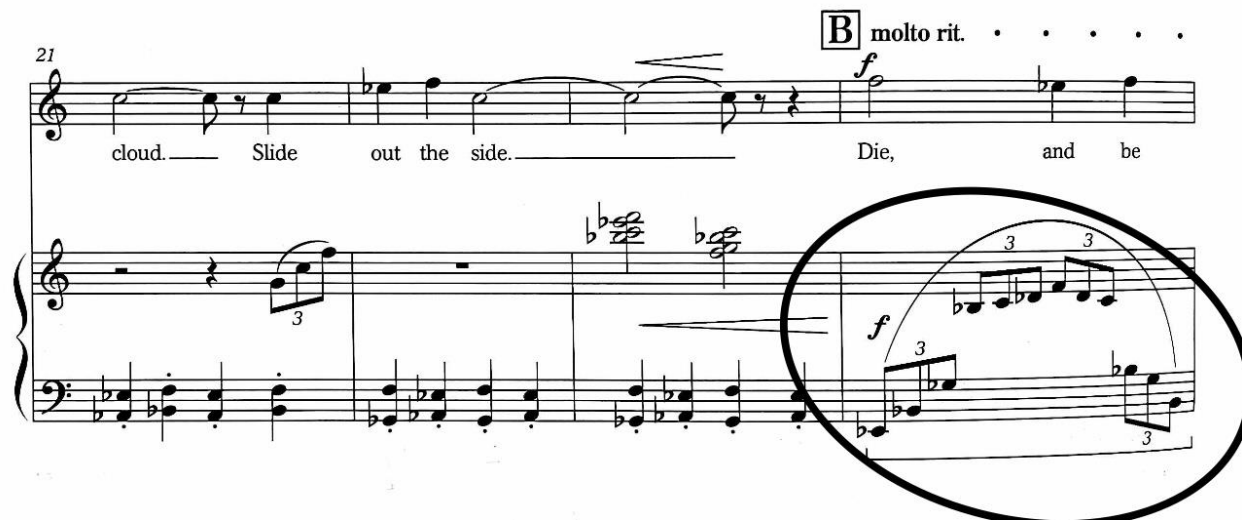


Figure 4.2. Gwyneth Walker, “Quietness,” mm. 21-24.

It is the final thematic idea in the song. Walker uses sparse accompaniment with the voice by shaping the phrase and providing the audience textual meaning. This continues for another six measures. It ends on measure 30 with a non-metered vocal line on a C5. While the voice is singing their line, the pianist is playing an ascending flat note scale with a final strum on the high strings inside the piano, a unique ending to the piece.

Pedagogical Considerations

When learning this song, the performer must understand the transition from “Circling the Sun” to “Quietness.” Even though it is a new piece, it is important for the performer and the audience to be able to follow the storyline. The singer needs to stay engaged in the story they are telling and not break character between the pieces. The transition between the two songs should be as if it’s a new thought that the “lover” has realized through the finding of love in the first song. Be mindful of the piano’s role in this piece. In the B section, there is staccato, shown in figure 4.1, which represents the sense of marching and breaking free. Take this into consideration when you are developing the story in your mind.

Poetic Analysis

The poetry represents the losing of one's individual, single self and embracing the new life one experiences with love. Walker puts a reference mark on the bottom of the score to let the performer know how to interpret the song. She writes "This (die) refers to a surrender (death) of self, of the will, to love".²⁵ The song describes the courage it takes to give up the life you once had and to break free from your old ways.

Inside this new love, die.

With this love, you are letting go of your old life

Your way begins on the other side.

Your new life with your love, starts now

Become the sky.

let yourself lighten and become part of the new side

Take an axe to the prison wall.

Escape from your old life and break away

Escape.

Go towards your new life

Walk out like someone suddenly born into color.

Join the new side of life with a new sense. See the beauty in the world now that your free

Do it now.

Don't look back

You're covered with thick cloud.

you're scared to enter this new life because you are used to the old way

Slide out the side.

Move into the new

Die, and be quiet.

²⁵ Gwyneth Walker, *The Sun is Love: For High Voice and Piano* (Boston, Massachusetts: ECS Publishing, 2003), 7.

Have your old way of life die and no longer call to you

Quietness is the surest sign that you've died.

When the quietness has come (your mind telling you to be afraid) has stopped

Your old life was a frantic running from silence.

You were always running away from love and the new way of life

The speechless full moon comes out now.

Quietness(love) has taken over and it is now part of your life.

Chapter 5 - Flirtation: Light and Wine and Pomegranate Flowers

The third song, “Flirtation” is the longest of the cycle, with a duration of 4 minutes and 30 seconds. This song focuses on “love” singing to her beloved and playfully flirting. Walker titles this song "Flirtation: Light and Wine and Pomegranate Flowers" as a set of short flirtatious songs. She entices her lover to the orchard in Spring, and their souls dance. She tells him of the mysteries of life, and then chastises him when he falls asleep as she sings (!).²⁶

Song Analysis

Walker uses the same transitional technique that she used previously for “Circling the Sun” to “Quietness” to connect the songs together and create a flow from one piece to another. This song is slightly different because instead of the voice being the connecting material, she uses the piano. On the final measure of “Quietness” Walker gives the pianist a performance note indicating that the sostenuto pedal is held through the beginning of the next song. With the final ascending scale in “Quietness” it transitions into the tonal range that begins “Flirtation”. With these two musical ideas, it creates a smooth transition into the introduction of “Flirtation”.

²⁶ Gwyneth Walker, *The Sun is Love: For High Voice and Piano* (Boston, Massachusetts: ECS Publishing, 2003)

30 *p* Slowly

The speechless full moon comes out now. _____

(8va) -1

(Ped.)

(keep Ped. depressed through beginning of next song)

* Gentle strum on high strings inside Piano

DURATION: 1' 45"

Figure 5.1 Gwyneth Walker, “Flirtation,” mm. 30.

With the diverse thematic material in this song, there is a variety of key signatures. Within this key instability, rhythmic ideas help solidify the change in material. The song begins in the key of Ab major with a five-bar introduction; where the first measure is unmetered and then moves into 4/4. With both the final measure of “Quietness” and the initial measure of “Flirtation” being unmetered, the pieces are connected by a sustained pedal note. The song follows four-bar phrasing with few moments breaking that pattern. Section A modulates to E major and contains the main theme of the song. Walker does not use strong cadences to delineate each section, there for each section gradually transition from one to the next. We return to the key of E major each time the main theme returns, which happens three times. Walker uses a tango in Section A to give the idea of dancing and flirting with the lover. She purposefully did this because tango is considered a flirtatious and seductive dance, fitting for this song's topic. This tango is interrupted at the beginning of section B at measure 26, where new material is introduced. This four-bar phrase is in 5/4 and is set as a recitative, where she is flirting with her lover. There is a short four-measure piano interlude and then a return to E major with Theme A

[illegible]

She ends the arpeggiated pattern on a iii chord in E major, ending the second repetition of Theme A.

27

Rehearsal marking E, measure 61, returns the four-bar phrasing with the arpeggiated triplet pattern in the piano. Walker uses this pattern to help crescendo and accelerate, which stops when the singer sings a B3, stating a new set of text “our souls are dancing with you, without feet”.²⁷ Rehearsal marking G is still in the daydream sequence, but the dream has advanced to the next section with the triplet pattern returning in the piano. This part represents the realization of the love she has found, and she brings herself back to reality with her excitement. Walker marks this at the bottom of the page with an asterisk stating, “she is telling her lover the mysteries of life.”.²⁸ At measure 80, the tango rhythmic material returns. After a brief four bar interlude of the tango material, it switches back to the dreamlike material at measure 84, the beginning of section H.

Sections H and I use the same triplet pattern, which Walker describes as “fluid, as curtains blowing in the breeze”.²⁹ The dynamics slowly grow from piano to fortissimo as The protagonist is telling more of these mysteries of life to her lover while she attempts to keep him awake. This section end on a fortissimo Bb⁷ chord. Once she has wakened her lover again, Walker returns to the tango material for four bars. It is almost identical to Theme A except the ending has a long triplet pattern in the vocal line which ends on an unexpected A#5, which does not fit the key signature. This gives the ending an unfinished feeling, which transitions into the next song.

Pedagogical Considerations

²⁷ Gwyneth Walker, *The Sun is Love: For High Voice and Piano* (Boston, Massachusetts: ECS Publishing, 2003), 14.

²⁸ Ibid., 16.

²⁹ Ibid.

When learning this song, it is quite easy to get off track in the music. Remembering that the A Theme returns 3 times is helpful as well as being aware that each return of the A Theme adds more material. Once the final statement is reached, the longest “la” section appears. Vocally it is important to stay on top of the pitch on the staccato notes. Beginning and ending consonants should be focused on. Since the text is complicated, characterization will need to be added. This will allow the audience to understand the text. Focusing on the dreamlike sequences and moving different parts of the stage will help delineate each section. Offering a flirtatious attitude in the A Theme can give the audience insight into the text as well.

Poetic Analysis

As stated in the song analysis, there are daydreaming sequences and realizations about the mysteries of life conveyed by the text. Having a clear understanding of these ideas will help when trying to decipher the meaning behind the text. Walker gives hints of this in her scores and tries to help the performer as much as possible. The idea of flirtation is imperative when looking at this text.

Come to the orchard in Spring.

Come be with me

There is light and wine, and sweethearts in the pomegranate flowers.

Everything you could want is right here

If you do not come, these do not matter.

If you don't come see me, you do not get to have me

If you do come, these do not matter.

If you do come, you still may not (flirting)

Daylight, full of small dancing particles

She is discovery all the new things about the world and describing it to her lover

and the one great turning,

The world is constantly turning but we are still together
our souls are dancing with you, without feet, they dance.

Our souls are together, intertwined

Can you see them when I whisper in your ear?

Can you feel our love and see it

I would love to kiss you.

I would love to kiss you

The price of kissing is your life.

Kissing will only make us closer, and you will be with me

Now my loving is running toward my life shouting,

My heart is so excited, it is racing and letting me know this is love

What a bargain, let's buy it.

I can't believe I have found love

The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.

You must listen to nature to hear the world's secrets

Don't go back to sleep.

Don't miss these moments

You must ask for what you really want.

You must tell me what you want from this

Don't go back to sleep.

Don't go away

People are going back and forth across the doorsill where the two worlds touch.

People are constantly leaving this world and new spirits come into the world

The door is round and open.

The door is always there

Don't go back to sleep

Don't sleep through this

Come to the orchard in Spring.

Come stay with me

There is light and wine, and sweethearts in the pomegranate flowers.

Where we can drink and be happy together

Come to the orchard in Spring.

Stay with me here in this love

Chapter 6 - The Sunrise Ruby

“Sunrise Ruby,” the fourth song of the cycle focuses on the giving of oneself over to the other until they are one. The song is approximately 3 minutes and 15 seconds. Walker states “The Sunrise Ruby,” is a passionate song. The singer asks, “Do you love me or yourself more?” He answers, “There’s nothing left of me...I’m like a ruby held up to the sunlight.” As he surrenders to love.³⁰

Song Analysis

The song begins in the key of Eb minor with the piano playing a repeated Db4 and Eb4 eighth note pattern. Walker continues this pattern for two measures and then adds a Cb4. She uses a lot of text illustration through the harmonic material. This is prevalent with the Db4 and Eb4 eighth note pattern that begins the song.



Figure 6.1 Gwyneth Walker, “The Sunrise Ruby,” mm. 1-4.

³⁰ Gwyneth Walker, *The Sun is Love: For High Voice and Piano* (Boston, Massachusetts: ECS Publishing, 2003)

The purpose of this is explained by Walker: “The interval of the second, which opens and closes the song, symbolizes the closeness of the two lovers.”³¹ She continues this representation throughout the song. For example, Walker reiterates the rolling, circling pattern from “Circling the Sun” with a sextuplet pattern in the piano that begins on measure 23. This pattern returns throughout the cycle each time she is referencing the sun.

Figure 6.2. Gwyneth Walker, “The Sunrise Ruby,” mm. 23-25.

The vocal line begins on measure 5 with a Eb4 marked *piano*. Walker still uses her signature triplet pattern, but has it span over the length of two notes instead of one, which gives it an elongated feeling. Walker continues to add notes into the eighth note pattern and grow the

³¹ Gwyneth Walker, *The Sun is Love: For High Voice and Piano* (Boston, Massachusetts: ECS Publishing, 2003)

harmonic material until measure 16, where the culmination of all the added notes strike a large chord. The chord contains ten notes, creating a large cluster of sound. This chord is struck when the text starts a new thought. Measure 16 is a great example of the modified strophic form. Walker has the chorus material repeat twice throughout the song, but the verse material is different each time. She creates variety in the verse by using different tempi, rhythm, and melodic material.

Rehearsal marking A, Walker introduces new material. The key changes to Bb minor with an arpeggiated sixteenth note pattern at a faster tempo. This is the introduction to the chorus material “there’s nothing left of me”.³² The chorus is in 6/4 and 4/4 time and has a sixteenth and sextuplet note pattern under the voice. The text is repeated multiple times throughout the song with the same notes, Bb and Db. This pattern breaks after a sustained F5 in measure 25. Walker brings back the sixteenth note patterns as there is new text introduced through measures 26 to 30. Rehearsal marking B, measure 31, begins in the key of Bb major. While the piano has a large interlude, the vocalist sings “Ah” as a background sonority. The sextuplet pattern returns and is intermixed with the sixteenth note pattern used earlier. This goes on until measure 39, where Bb minor returns and then the chorus is reiterated. This time instead of singing a sustained F5, Walker utilizes a Bb5 in the voice for more impact. This is held out for four measures, while the pianist plays the sextuplet and sixteenth note pattern under the voice. At measure 49, rehearsal marking D, there is a break in all material as a loud Gb⁷ chord is struck on beat one. The voice takes over, singing slowly and freely the final text of the song “this is how Lord said “I am God”

³² Gwyneth Walker, *The Sun is Love: For High Voice and Piano* (Boston, Massachusetts: ECS Publishing, 2003), 23.

and told the truth! The ruby and the sunrise are one.”.³³ While this text is being stated the accompaniment sustains a Gb⁷ chord then transitions into an arpeggiated eighth note pattern with the final repetition of the same intervals that began the song, suggesting the closeness of the two lovers.

Pedagogical Considerations

The first thing to consider when learning this song is the time signature. While it always stays with the quarter note receiving the beat, switches between 6/4 and 4/4 need to be noted so notes are being held to the correct length. Also, when singing it is important to note the dynamics used. The dynamics used will help with phrasing of the song especially on the sustained notes, most importantly the high Bb starting on measure 45. The note is held for four slow measures, which can be vocally challenging. A successful approach is to begin the note piano and slowly crescendo into forte. Dynamics are also important when singing quick interval jumps. It is easier to stay on the top of the pitch if the air is not being pushed to reach the higher register.

Poetic Analysis

This is one of the more easily comprehensible texts. While there are sections of the poetry that can be challenging to understand, the overall premise of the song makes it easier to grasp. This poem focuses on the lover and beloved and how they are becoming one with each other. The trickiest part to understand is the line “This is how the Lord said, “I am God” and told the truth”.³⁴ To my understanding this means God put them together to show what true love is and to show that he is real. Below is my interpretation of the remaining text.

³³ Gwyneth Walker, *The Sun is Love: For High Voice and Piano* (Boston, Massachusetts: ECS Publishing, 2003), 28.

³⁴ Ibid.

In the early morning hour,

In the morning

just before dawn, lover and beloved wake

the two lovers wake up together

and take a drink of water.

And take in each other, physically and spiritually

She asks, “Do you love me or yourself more?

She wants to know if he truly loves her

Really, tell the absolute truth.”

She doesn't want him to lie to her

He says, “There's nothing left of me.

He is fully hers. He has given his whole self over to her

I'm like a ruby held up to the sunrise.

he is transparent and filled with love (sun)

Is it still a stone, or a world made of redness?

I am still myself, or am I man filled with you and your love

It has no resistance to sunlight.”

I have no resistance to you and your love (sun)

This is how the Lord said, I am God

Lord created us to be together

and told the truth!

And this is his truth

The ruby and the sunrise are one.

We were made to be together.

Chapter 7 - Dualities

“Dualities” is different from all other songs within the cycle. It is broken into four musical aphorisms. In a footnote Walkers describing this stating that “it is short commentaries on the dual nature of love.”³⁵ She suggests that the singer sing each section from a different location on the stage.

7 *frustrated!*
can't go to sleep. *f* Praise God for these two in -

f gruffly
(Sust., Sft. Ped.)

* These are musical aphorisms—short commentaries on the dual nature of love. It is suggested that the singer sing each section from a different location on the stage.

Figure 7.1. Gwyneth Walker, “Dualities: insomnias,” mm. 7-9.

This song has a run time of approximately four minutes. Walker gives the performer and audience an idea of how to view this set of aphorisms by stating "Dualities" is a lighthearted group of song-fragments, each expressing a contradictory set of aspects of love.”³⁶

³⁵ Gwyneth Walker, *The Sun is Love: For High Voice and Piano* (Boston, Massachusetts: ECS Publishing, 2003)

³⁶ Ibid.

A. “Insomnias”

Song Analysis

Within this thirteen-bar fragment, Walker creates a striking atmosphere. The piece begins in the key of C major but uses deceptive cadences to divert the listener’s ear. It quickly alternates between 4/4 and 6/4 meter creating a dragging feeling. This drag is a representation of the insomnia and lack of sleep in the singer. The song doesn’t follow a strict phrasal pattern, alternating between two and three bar phrases. These phrases are set using the text because of the limited use of piano within this fragment. When the piano plays, the motivic material is blurred by quick repetition. For example, the repeated pattern at the opening continues for eight measures.

[Singer moves forward]

$\text{♩} = 96$ Leisurely tempo

p gently

When I am with you, we stay up all night. —

pp repeat note pattern rapidly, blurred, unmeasured thru m. 8

Sustain & Soft Ped.

Figure 7.2. Gwyneth Walker, “Dualities: insomnias,” mm.1-3.

This blurred pattern creates a dreamlike sequence that is broken at measure nine with a rolled chord under the declamatory text “Praise God for these two insomnias!”.³⁷ The rolled Ab7 chord land under the word God creating a stronger meaning. The fragment ends slowly on a

³⁷ Gwyneth Walker, *The Sun is Love: For High Voice and Piano* (Boston, Massachusetts: ECS Publishing, 2003), 29-30, m. 8-10.

repeated G4 in the voice with no accompaniment, followed by three grace notes played up an octave with a C1 for finality.

B. “Meetings”

Song Analysis

“Meetings” is the longest of the four fragments at 33 measures. It begins with a gentle tango in the key of B minor. This tango is similar to what is used in “Flirtation” but is slower and moves between compound and simple meter. As shown below the tango is further emphasized by the vocal line singing offbeats.

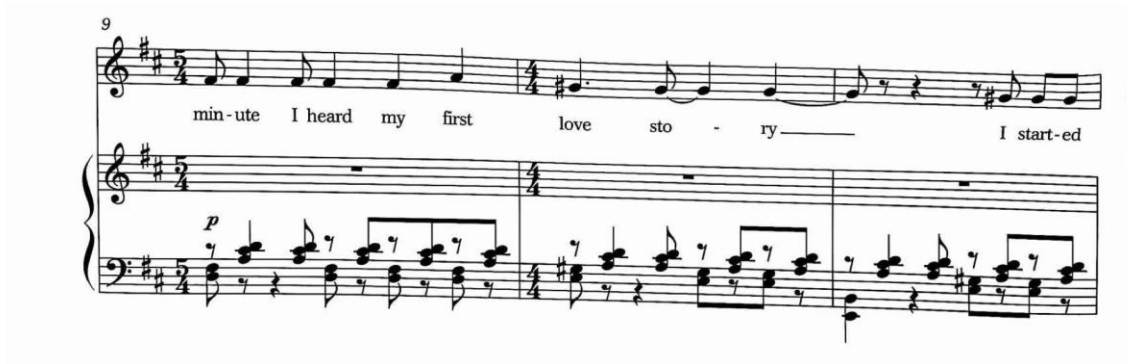
The image shows a musical score for measures 9-11 of the song "Meetings". The score is written for voice and piano. The key signature is B minor (two sharps: F# and C#). The time signature is 5/4. The vocal line is in the upper staff, and the piano accompaniment is in the lower staff. The vocal line begins with the lyrics "min-ute I heard my first love sto-ry" and ends with "I start-ed". The piano accompaniment features a tango rhythm with offbeats. The score is marked with a "p" for piano. The measures are numbered 9, 10, and 11 at the top of the staves.

Figure 7.3 Gwyneth Walker, “Dualities: meetings,” mm. 9-11.

The tango material continues until measure 23 where Walker employs the repeated unaccompanied text “they’re in each other all along”.³⁸, with the final iteration set to rhythmically deliberate quarter notes above a sustained chord in the piano. This text slows and end with the singer sustaining F#4 for four measures while the tango material returns and ends the fragment.

³⁸ Gwyneth Walker, *The Sun is Love: For High Voice and Piano* (Boston, Massachusetts: ECS Publishing, 2003), 31-32, m. 23-32.

C. “Mirrors”

Song Analysis

“Mirrors” begins in the key of A minor. The first measure of the fragment has the circling motive in the piano that is also used in the first song of the cycle “Circling the Sun”. It also includes the five-note pattern that is used in the first fragment “insomnias”. These two themes come together and create an atmospheric sound of never-ending motion.

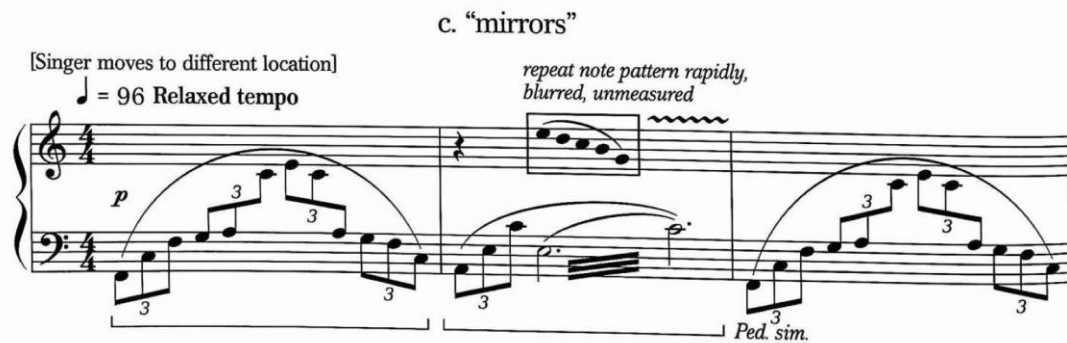


Figure 7.4 Gwyneth Walker, “Dualities: mirrors,” mm. 1-3.

After the piano has set the scene, the voice enters in measure 4 on a repeated A4 similar to the opening of dualities. the circling motive is interrupted by block chords and declamatory vocal line sung forte. This happens twice, once in measure 11 and again in measure 17. The second time is faster, more intense and leads to the climax with the voice singing a fermata high A. The song circles back to a five note pattern that is similar to the beginning but slower.

D. “Stones”

Song Analysis

“Stones” begins in the key of Bb major. The first four measures represent the strumming of a lute and act as an introduction to the fragment and focuses attention on what is to come. This is marked with a double bar line.

d. “stones”

[Singer moves to different location]

♩ = 72 Slowly, as if gently strumming a lute

more quickly ♩ = 108

Soft Ped. _____ (Sft.) & Sust. Ped. _____

Figure 7.5 Gwyneth Walker, “Dualities: stones,” mm.1-5.

At measure 5 the tempo quickens, and the song begins. Walker uses rolled cluster chords to represent the closeness of the lovers; this continues until measure 15. The voice enters urgently with a pickup to measure 7, building to F5 on the repeat of “loving”.³⁹ In measure 14, it switches to a quasi-recitative section. The accompaniment and the voice are interacting with each other as the vocalist sings “You would rather throw stones at a mirror?”.⁴⁰ the piano responds with a marcato cluster chord, followed by a staccato cluster chord in the higher register. This can be

³⁹ Gwyneth Walker, *The Sun is Love: For High Voice and Piano* (Boston, Massachusetts: ECS Publishing, 2003), 35, m. 12-13.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 36, m. 14.

interpreted in two ways. The cluster chord can be a response from the lover, or it can represent her throwing a stone at him. I interpret it as her throwing stones.

36

14

quasi recitative

mf questioningly, flirtatiously

You would rather throw stones at a mir - ror? I am your mir - ror, and here are the

f

p

Figure 7.6 Gwyneth Walker, “Dualities: stones,” mm. 14.

And the final statement is followed by a triplet pattern “random black keys scampering up and down.”⁴¹ The scampering of black keys represents the throwing of stones, with the final stone thrown at the pianist.

Pedagogical consideration

When learning “Dualities” it is important to know where you are in your characters’ development. The singer needs to give the audience an idea of what is happening in context of each fragment. Walker helps with this by providing direction to the performer. With the stage directions, performers will be able to tell the story for each fragment. She also includes hints to how you should be feeling. In “insomnias” Walker marks the music with the word “frustrated.” You can get a sense of what she is looking for if you look at the marcato and accents written

⁴¹ Gwyneth Walker, *The Sun is Love: For High Voice and Piano* (Boston, Massachusetts: ECS Publishing, 2003)

above certain words. These markings will help shape the song and connect each fragment to each other.

Staging is important for “Dualities”. It will help differentiate the meaning behind the text. Walker’s directions on having the singer move to a different part of the stage is important to her and each movement that is done should be purposeful. “Stones” has the most recommended stage movements. Throwing the stones should be done playfully and lovingly.

Poetic Analysis

The text comes from four separate Rumi poems selected by Walker, each showing contradicting aspects of love. Walker includes a note stating ““Dualities” is a lighthearted group of song-fragments, each expressing a contradictory set of aspects of love. She has insomnia when her lover is present (staying up all night together) and when he is absent (distraction). Looking outward for love and looking within. Love as pain, and the sweet cold water that cures the pain. Holding the lover close like a lute or tossing stones (teasingly) at the beloved. In keeping with the dualities topic of the lyrics, each song employs opposing musical elements: high and low ranges of the piano, alternations between two chords, or gentle strumming (lute) vs. scampering intervals (tossing stones).”⁴²

a. “insomnias”

When I am with you, we stay up all night.

When I am with you I don’t want to miss a moment

When you’re not here, I can’t go to sleep.

When you are gone, I can’t stop thinking about you

Praise God for these two insomnias!

⁴² Gwyneth Walker, *The Sun is Love: For High Voice and Piano* (Boston, Massachusetts: ECS Publishing, 2003)

Thank you God for the reasons behind losing sleep

And the difference between them.

And how they differ from each other

b. “meetings”

The minute I heard my first love story

When I was young and learned about love

I started looking for you, not knowing

I started looking for it. Not knowing

how blind that was.

You can’t find it automatically

Lovers don’t finally meet somewhere.

You don’t meet your love anywhere

They’re in each other all along.

You must love yourself first and then they will come

c. “mirrors”

We are the mirror as well as the face in it.

We are the judge and jury of ourselves

We are tasting the taste this minute

We are living this moment for the first and last time

of eternity. We are pain

We can hurt ourselves

and what cures pain, both. We are

and we can cure ourselves

the sweet cold water and the jar that pours.

We are the love we need, and we can give it to ourselves

d. “stones”

I want to hold you close like a lute,

I want to be close to you

so we can cry out with loving.

So we can be close to each other

You would rather throw stones at a mirror?

You would rather argue and fight with each other

I am your mirror, and here are the stones.

I am the person you are hurting and these are my wounds

Chapter 8 - A Waterbird (Flying into the Sun)

“A Waterbird” is the final song in the cycle with a run time of approximately 3 minutes and 20 seconds. This song is the culmination of all the themes and stages of love that Walker has demonstrated throughout the cycle. ““A Waterbird” is a pure love song, without teasing or flirtation.”.⁴³

Song Analysis

This piece begins in the key of C major with a short arpeggiation that leads into a stream of repeated eighth note chords that continues until Letter B. The voice enters as the lover describes seeing her beloved face in various places. New musical material is introduced in the piano at Letter B as the singer continues seeing her lovers face all around her. In this section Walker brings back the unifying circular motive in the accompaniment. It is used when the text “to turn with the wheel of the rain.”.⁴⁴ This is both the return of motivic material and the use of text painting with the idea of a spinning wheel. Letter B includes a wide range of dynamic shaping that grows to a climax in measure 39. The listener is expecting the climax of the song with a strong cadence, but instead Walker diverts the listeners ear with a half cadence.

After the half cadence in Letter D, Walker uses the same melodic material as B only with different text. The repeated melodic material ends at measure 51 with the pianist striking a Db7 chord held by a fermata as the singer fiercely declaims “I am tired of cowards”. The next three measures are based on the vocalist’s interpretation. Walker has marked it as “Slower, freely”.⁴⁵

⁴³ Gwyneth Walker, *The Sun is Love: For High Voice and Piano* (Boston, Massachusetts: ECS Publishing, 2003)

⁴⁴ Ibid., 38, m. 25-28.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

with forte and marcato markings. The vocalist must decipher the text and decide how to emphasize this three measure break.

At Letter E, *a tempo* returns with the circular motive in the piano. Walker employs the key of b minor to create a feeling of longing. As the singer is stating what she wants the dynamics grow into the line “I am a waterbird”.⁴⁶ Once that text has been stated, the piano introduces a new energized quintuplet pattern that grows higher and higher as the singer declares she is “flying into the sun”.⁴⁷ At Letter F, the key transitions to Bb Major. The vocalist sustains an F5 while the piano plays the repeating eighth note pattern that was used in the beginning of the song. Once the eighth note pattern breaks, the text “What I want” and “to see your face”⁴⁸ is repeated, similar to earlier in the song.

⁴⁶ Gwyneth Walker, *The Sun is Love: For High Voice and Piano* (Boston, Massachusetts: ECS Publishing, 2003), 41-42, m. 63-64.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 42, m. 68-74.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 43, m. 74-79.

74 *f* $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ 43

What I want, what I want, what I want, what I want, what I want is to

78 *p* rit. a tempo $\text{♩} = 120$

see your face, to see your face, to see your face, to see your face. Be-yond want-ing,—

Figure 8.1 Gwyneth Walker, “A Waterbird,” mm. 74-80.

Walker is still growing the excitement, so she has the circling motive return once more. Finally at letter G, the last iteration of “I am a waterbird”.⁴⁹ is used. The pianist is playing a quintuplet pattern under the vocal line which builds excitement and joy. “Flying into the Sun”.⁵⁰ is the final statement of the song with the vocalist holding an A5 for six measures. The piano ends the song with a ritardando of the quintuplet pattern into a final held fermata.

Pedagogical Consideration

⁴⁹ Gwyneth Walker, *The Sun is Love: For High Voice and Piano* (Boston, Massachusetts: ECS Publishing, 2003), 43-44, m. 84-87.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 44, m. 92-96.

When learning this final song, it is important to encompass all the ideas that have been displayed throughout the whole cycle. It is the finale of the lovers journey to find and accept love. It is important for the vocalist to pace themselves and allow the voice to grow into the final High A, so it can have a largest impact. Due to the multiple sustained notes, it is important the singer keep the breath supported. While staying supported, the vocalist should follow the stage markings that Walker has provided. The main marking is the final one which states “Singer with arms outstretched, as a waterbird is flying into the sun”.⁵¹ Practicing this motion will allow for it to feel natural when performed.

Poetic analysis

Walker added her own line of text to Rumi’s poetry. This is the only song she did this for. The line of text she added was “What I wanted was to see your face”.⁵² This is not part of Rumi original text, but it adds so much meaning. Interpretation of the text is incredibly important which I have stated previously, but it is especially true in the work because of the hidden meanings Rumi used in his words and his virtuosic writing. I have included my interpretation of the text but feel free to interpret it differently.

A Waterbird (Flying into the Sun)

What I want is to see your face

I want to see you

In a tree, in the sun coming out,

To see you in everything

⁵¹ Gwyneth Walker, *The Sun is Love: For High Voice and Piano* (Boston, Massachusetts: ECS Publishing, 2003), 45.

⁵² Ibid., 37 and 43.

in the air.

to feel you in the air

What I want is to hear the falcon-drum, and light again on your forearm

I want to hear the beating of your heart

To see in every palm your elegant silver coin shavings,

to see every crease in the palm of your hand

to turn with the wheel of the rain,

to not resist you

to fall with the falling bread.

To be with you like communion

To swim like a huge fish in ocean water,

I want to feel powerful

to be Jacob recognizing Joseph.

to see each other and be reunited

To be a desert mountain instead of a city.

To be peaceful

I'm tired of cowards.

I'm tired of being afraid

I want to live with lions.

I want to be brave

with Moses.

To live how Moses did

I want to sing like birds sing,

I want to be unapologetic

not worrying who hears, or what they think.

not caring what people think

I am a waterbird flying into the sun.

I am a bird disappearing into the sunlight

What I want is to see your face

I want you

Beyond wanting, beyond place.

its more than wanting, it's a need

I am a waterbird flying into the sun

I am a bird disappearing into the sunlight

Chapter 9 - Conclusion

The Sun is Love is a great option for a vocalist looking for a song cycle that is not performed often. It is accessible for singers looking to perform a large work or individual solo repertoire. Any of the songs within the cycle would be a great introduction to Walker's vocal repertoire.

The Sun is Love includes all the aspects of Walkers' compositional style. It demonstrates her use of piano accompaniment to expand the storyline and engage the audience. Her ability to set poetry with dense material and using text painting with elaborate rhythmic and dynamic expression to aid in the understanding. All these aspects come together and create a unique style that identifies Gwyneth Walker and her compositions. It is my hope that through this thesis, vocalists will perform *The Sun is Love* and also explore Walker's other solo works.

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