

VMP030 / SZYMKO / A Burst of Song (3 mvts.) / SSAA, piano /dur: 7'

J O A N S Z Y M K O

# A Burst of Song

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

choral setttings of poetry by  
Rabindranath Tagore

for  
ssaa chorus and piano

*Original tbb version Commissioned by the New Jersey Gay Men's Chorus  
in Celebration of its 20th Anniversary, Steven A. Russell, Artistic Director*

## Joan Szymko

Joan Szymko's music is sung by distinguished ensembles across North America and abroad, with performances at international competitions and festivals, at state and regional conferences, and at six consecutive National Conferences of the American Choral Directors Association. Works such as "Nada te turbe" and "It Takes a Village" have entered into the standard repertoire. Especially significant is Szymko's contribution to the body of quality literature for women's voices. The ACDA has recognized Joan's lasting contribution to the choral arts by selecting her as the recipient of the 2010 Raymond W. Brock Memorial Commission, "All Works of Love."

Composing for choir was a natural outgrowth of Joan's creativity as a conductor. She has led community and church choirs in the Pacific Northwest for over three decades. As with her conducting, Joan's dedication to craft and artistry, her love and respect for the singer, and her insistence on quality texts are all reflected in her choral writing. She currently directs Aurora Chorus and is a resident composer with Do Jump! Movement Theater in Portland, Oregon.

## Notes

*A Burst of Song* was commissioned by the New Jersey Gay Men's Chorus in 2010 for their 20th Anniversary Season. I sought texts that celebrated the healing aspects of song, especially since this community chorus had lived through the AIDS epidemic and so had experienced the pain and grief of overwhelming loss. Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), a native of Bengal was first and foremost a poet. The texts for *A Burst of Song* are primarily from his most famous volume: *Gitanjali: Song Offerings* (1912). I hoped to illuminate the poet's heartfelt beliefs about the divine grace and power of song. While exploring Tagore and selecting texts, I found these words from his book from *Fruit Gathering*:

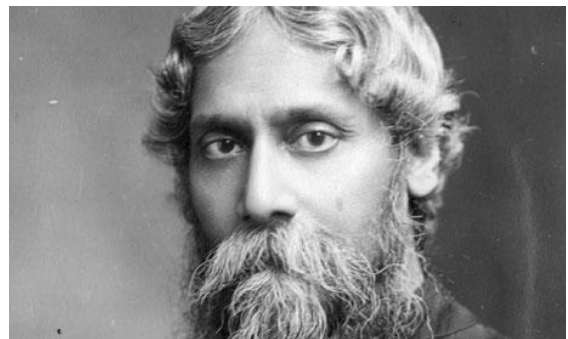
"To the birds you gave songs, the birds gave you songs  
in return. You gave me only voice, yet asked for more,  
and I sing."

Around the same time I happened to be reading about French composer, organist and ornithologist Oliver Messiaen, and his use of birdsong in his works. The opening notes sounded by the piano in *A Shower of Mercy* are a kind of "nod" to this happy coincidence, and served as inspiration for the entire work and the brief passing theme (descending minor 3rds) reoccurs as transitional material in the last movement.



## Rabindranath Tagore

Bengali writer Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) worked in various literary genres, but was first and foremost a poet. He was the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize for Literature (1913). The texts for "A Burst of Song" are primarily from his most famous volume: *Gitanjali: Song Offerings* (1912) which he himself translated into English. For a more complete biography see: [http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/literature/](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/)



photograph: Hulton Archive

# A Burst of Song

## 1. A Shower of Mercy

*To the birds you gave songs, the birds gave you songs in return.  
You gave me only voice, yet asked for more, and I sing.  
(LXXVIII from "Fruit Gathering" - R. Tagore)*

Rabindranath Tagore  
excerpt from "Beggarly Heart" (Gitanjali)

Joan Szymko

The musical score is set in 4/4 time with a tempo marking of quarter note = 72. It begins with a piano introduction marked *f* (forte) in the right hand and *mf* (mezzo-forte) in the left hand. The piano part features a melodic line in the right hand and a harmonic accompaniment in the left hand, with dynamics ranging from *f* to *mp* (mezzo-piano). The tempo is marked *poco rit.* (poco ritardando) towards the end of the piano section.

The vocal section begins at measure 6, marked *A tempo*. The Soprano (S) part starts with a rest, followed by the lyrics "come u-pon me" in measure 7, marked *p* (piano). The Alto (A) part begins in measure 6 with the lyrics "When the heart is hard and parched," in measure 7, marked *p*, and continues with "come u-pon me" in measure 8, marked *pp* (pianissimo). The piano accompaniment for the vocal section is marked *A tempo* and *sostenuto* (sustained), starting with a *p* dynamic in the right hand and *mp* in the left hand, with dynamics shifting to *p* in the final measures.



20 **Tempo primo** *dim.* *mp* *accel.* .....

When grace is lost from life, come, come,

When grace is lost from life, come,

is lost from life, come,

come, come,

When grace is lost, come

**Tempo primo** *mf* *dim.* *mp* *mf* *accel.* .....

*le so va* | 2 1 3

*Ped.*

come, \_\_\_\_\_ come \_\_\_\_\_ *mf*

come, \_\_\_\_\_ N.B. *f* come with a burst of song.

come, \_\_\_\_\_ N.B. *f* come with a burst of song.

come, \_\_\_\_\_ *mf*

come, \_\_\_\_\_ *mf*

*f* *mf*

*Ped.*

*f* \_\_\_\_\_ *f* come with a burst, a burst of song,

come with a burst, a burst of song,

come with a burst of song.

come with a burst of song.

*f* *f*  $\text{♩} = 108$



a burst of song.

a burst of song.

a burst of song.

*cresc.*

1 3

32 *ff* 1'45"

Come with a burst of song.

*ff*

Come with a burst of song.

*ff*

Come with a burst of song.

*ff*

Come with a burst of song.

3

*ff*

*attacca*

## A Burst of Song 2. A Kiss of Blessing

Rabindranath Tagore  
"This Song of Mine,"  
#38 from *The Crescent Moon*

Joan Szymko

**Andante** ♩=64

*Espressivo* **poco rit.** .. **A tempo**

S1 This

S2 This  
*p* This song of mine, will wind its mu-sic a-round you, my child, This

A1 This  
*p* This song of mine, will wind its mu-sic a-round you, my child,

A2 This

**Andante** ♩=64 **poco rit.** .. **A tempo**

*Espressivo*

Piano *p*



4

rit. . . . . A tempo

*p* *mp*

N.B.

S1  
 song of mine will wind its mu - sic a - round you like the fond arms of

S2  
 song of mine will wind a - round you the

A1  
 wind its mu sic,

A2  
 song of mine will wind its mu -

8

poco rit. *dim.*

*mp* *dim.*

*mp* *dim.*

*mp* *dim.*

8

poco rit.

love, the fond arms of love.

fond arms of love, of love.

the fond arms of love.

the fond arms of

love, the fond arms of love.

fond arms of love, of love.

the fond arms of love.

the fond arms of



17 Più mosso ♩=72

S1 *mp* kiss, like a kiss, a kiss of bless- ing

S2

A1 *p* like a kiss, *mp* like a kiss a kiss.

A2 *mp* like a kiss a kiss of

17 Più mosso ♩=72

21 poco rit. A tempo

S1 *mf* like a kiss, like a kiss.

S2 *mf* like a kiss, like a kiss.

A1 *mf* like a kiss, like a kiss, like a

A2 bless - ing, like a kiss,

21 poco rit. A tempo

26 **Più mosso** ♩=84 *mf* like a kiss.

S1

S2

A1  
kiss.

A2  
*f* like a kiss

26 **Più mosso** ♩=84  
*mp* *cresc. poco a poco*

28 **Robustly** *mf*

My song will be like a pair of wings to your

My song will be like a pair of wings to your

My song will be like a pair of wings to your

My song will be like a pair of wings to your

28 *mf* *cresc. poco a poco*

30

dreams \_\_\_\_\_ your

dreams \_\_\_\_\_ like wings \_\_\_\_\_

dreams \_\_\_\_\_ like wings \_\_\_\_\_

dreams \_\_\_\_\_ like wings \_\_\_\_\_ to your

30

32

dreams, \_\_\_\_\_ dreams, \_\_\_\_\_ *mf* it will trans-*mf* port your heart \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ your dreams, \_\_\_\_\_ your heart \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ your heart \_\_\_\_\_

dreams, \_\_\_\_\_ *f* like \_\_\_\_\_ *mf* wings, \_\_\_\_\_ your heart \_\_\_\_\_

32

35 *ff*

to the verge of the un - known

to the verge of the un - known *ff*

to the verge of the un - known *ff*

to the verge of the un - known *ff*

35

3 1 4 5

37 *f*

It will be like the

*f*

It will be like the

37 *f*

FOR PERUSAL ONLY

39

A1  
A2

faith - full star o - ver - head when

41

A1  
A2

dark night is o-ver your road, o-ver your road.

dark night is o-ver your road, o-ver your road.

*dim.* *molto rit.* *mp*

*mf* *mp*

*mf* *dim.*

*Poco meno mosso*

45

S1  
S2

My song will sit in the pu-pils of your eyes, and will

A1  
A2

My song will sit in the pu-pils of your eyes,

*dolce* *mf*

*p*

*Poco meno mosso dolce e sostenuto*

*mp*

48 **Più mosso** *f*

S1  
car - ry your sight in-to the heart of things.

S2  
car - ry your sight the heart of things.

A1 *mp* *mf*  
car - ry your sight in - to the heart of things.

A2 *mp* *mf*  
car - ry your sight in to the heart of things.

48 **Più mosso** *mf*

51 *mp* *p*

S  
And when my voice is

A *mp* *p*  
And when my voice is

51 *mp*



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

S  
sil - enced, sil - enced in death, *pp*

A  
sil - enced, sil - enced in death, *pp* my

*p* *mf* *pp*

Ped.

60 *mp* *mf* *mp*

S1  
song will speak in your liv - ing

S2  
song will speak in your liv - ing

A1  
song will speak in your liv - ing

A2  
song will speak in your liv - ing

60 *p*

Ped.

63

heart, \_\_\_\_\_ in your liv - ing heart.

heart.

heart, \_\_\_\_\_ in your liv - ing h

heart, \_\_\_\_\_ in your liv - ing heart.

*p*

*p*

*p*

63

*ped.*

66

*dim.*

*rit.*

4'

*dim.*

*dim.*

*n.*

66

*rit.*

*attacca*

# A Burst of Song

## 3. Thee and Me

Rabindranath Tagore  
from "Maya" (*Gitanjali*)

Joan Szymko

*con brio!* ♩=164

Piano

*f*

The first system of the piano accompaniment is in 3/8 time. It features a right-hand part with chords and a left-hand part with eighth-note patterns. The dynamic is marked *f*.

6 Tutti Sop *mf*

The great pa - geant of thee and me has

The second system includes a vocal line starting at measure 6, marked *mf*. The lyrics are "The great pa - geant of thee and me has". Below the vocal line is the piano accompaniment, with fingerings indicated for both hands (R.H. and L.H.).

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8

*cresc.*

o - ver spread the sky

*cresc.*

o - ver spread the sky

*cresc.*

o - - - - ver spread the

*cresc.*

o - ver spread the

*cresc.*

ped.

11

the sky.

*f*

the sky

*f*

sky the sky.

*f*

o - ver - spread the sky,

*f* 6 6 6 6

*mf*

With the tune of thee and

*mf*

With the tune of thee and

*mf*

With the tune of thee and

With the tune of thee and

FOR PERUSAL ONLY

Musical score for measures 13-15. It features four vocal staves and a piano accompaniment. The piano part includes sixteenth-note runs in the right hand and chords in the left hand. Dynamics include *mf* and *f*.

me all the air is vi- brant, and

me all the air is vi- brant, all the air is vi - bran[t]—

me all the air is vi - brant, and

me, all the air, and

R.H.

*cresc.*

L.H.

Red.

17

all a - ges pass, and

all a - ges pass, and

all a - ges pass, and

*f* L.H. R.H. 7 6 6 6 6 6

Ped.

20

all a - ges pass, and all a - ges

all a - ges pass, and all a - ges

a - ges pass, and all a - ges

all a - ges pass, and all a - ges

accel.

6 6 6 6 4

accel.

Ped.

Tempo primo

23

pass. with the hid - ing and  
 pass. with the hid - ing and  
 pass. hid - ing  
 pass. hid - ing

*mf* *mf* *mp* *mp*

*dim.* *mf*

Tempo primo

28

seek - ing of me and me.  
 seek - ing thee and me.  
 - ing thee and me,  
 seek - ing, thee and me,

*mf* *mf*

*f*

32

*mp* *cresc poco a poco*  
 hi - ding thee and me.

*mp* *cresc poco a poco*  
 hid - ing thee and me,

*cresc poco a poco*  
 hid - ing and seek - ing of thee

*cresc poco a poco*  
 hid - ing and seek - ing of thee and me.

*mf* *mp*

38

*f*  
 The great pa - geant of

*f* *poco dim.*  
 ee and me

*f* *poco dim.*  
 The great pa - geant of

*cresc. poco a poco* *f*  
 R.H. L.H.



42

N.B.

thee and me has o - ver spread the

*mf* *f*

o - ver spread

thee and me o - - - ver

Oh o - ver spread the

R.H.

3 1

Ped.

45

sky, the

sky, the

spread the, sky the

N.B.

sky, o - ver - spread the

1 2 1

47

sky. *ff*

sky. *ff*

sky. *ff*

sky. *ff*

sky,

6 6 6 6

49

*Ped.*

## **A Burst of Song**

- song texts -  
poetry by  
Rabindranth Tagore

### **1. A Shower of Mercy**

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

- from "Beggarly Heart" (*Gitanjali*)

### **2. A Kiss of Blessing**

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

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

### **3. Thee and Me**

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

- excerpt from "Maya" (*Gitanjali*)