

JS-057.2 / SZYMKO / A Kiss of Blessing / SATB, mz-sop & ten. soli, pno / dur:4'

J O A N S Z Y M K O

A Kiss of Blessing

poem by
Rabindranath Tagore

a setting for satb chorus,
mezzo-sop & tenor soli
and
piano

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 every National Conference of the American Choral Directors Association since 2003. Especially significant is Szymko's contribution to the body of quality literature for women's voices. The ACDA has recognized Szymko'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 vocal ensembles is an extension of Joan Szymko's creativity as a choral director; her passion for the art of singing, an embodied approach to sound, her dedication to storytelling and an insistence on quality texts all relate to her predilections as a conductor and are reflected in her choral compositions. Joan lives and works in the Pacific Northwest. She serves on the faculty of the Music School at Portland State University as director of PSU's select women's chorus, Vox Femina. She leads Aurora Chorus as Artistic Director and conductor, a post she has held since 1993. A resident composer with the award winning Do Jump! Movement Theater, Joan has performed her music on tour with the company from Broadway to LA.

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, *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 this brief passing theme (descending minor 3rds) reoccurs as transitional material in the last movement.

A Burst of Song

No.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.*

— excerpt from "Beggarly Heart" (*Gitanjali*)

No.2 A Kiss of Blessing

*This song of mine will wind its music around you,
my child, like the fond arms of love.
This 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.*

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

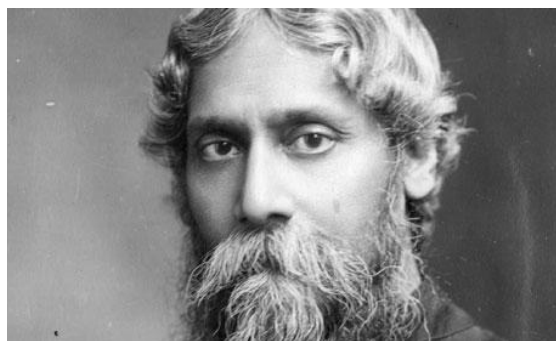
No. 3 Thee and Me

*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*)

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.



photograph: Hulton Archive

A Kiss of Blessing

No. 2 from "A Burst of Song"

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)
"This Song of Mine,"
#38 from *The Crescent Moon*

Joan Szymko

Mezzo-Sop Solo

p *espressivo* $\text{♩} = 64$

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

S1 *p* $\text{♩} = 64$ *espressivo*

A This

Piano

4 *rit.* *A tempo* *p* *mp*

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

S1 song of mine will wind a-round you the fond arms of

S2 wind its mu-sic,

A song of mine will wind its mu-sic,

4 *rit.* *A tempo* *p* *cresc.* *dim.*

9 *poco rit. dim.* **Poco meno mosso** ♩=60 *p*

fond arms of love.

dim. *p*

love, of love.

mp dim. p

the fond arms of love.

mp dim. p

the fond arms of love.

9 *poco rit.* **Poco meno mosso** ♩=60

for perusal only

p p pp p

14 *mezzo solo mp* *p*

This song of mine will touch your fore-head like a

14 *mp*

23 *mf* Più mosso ♩=84

like a kiss. _____

8 *mf* like a kiss, *f* like _____ a _____ kiss. _____

_____ *mf* like a kiss. _____

_____ *mf* like a kiss. _____

8 *mf* like a kiss, like _____ a _____ kiss. _____

mf kiss, like a kiss. _____

for perusal only

23 Più mosso ♩=84

mp *cresc. poco a poco*

28 *with excitement*
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 *with vigor*
mf *cresc. poco a poco*

for perusal only

30 *mf*
 dreams _____ your
 dreams _____ like wings _____
 dreams _____ like wings _____
 dreams _____ like wings _____ to your

30

32 *f* *mf*

dreams, your dreams, it will trans- port your heart

mf

it will trans- port your heart

dreams, like wings

your dreams,

T/B tacet to M48

dreams, like wings,

35 *f*

S to the verge of the un- known

A to the verge of the un- known

35 *f*

38 *f* Altos

A It will be like the faith- full star o- ver- head when

38

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48 Più mosso

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

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

S
car - ry your sight the heart of things.

A
mp in - to the heart of things. *mf*

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

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

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48 Più mosso

mf

51

Mezzo-sop solo *mp*
And when my voice is

Tenor solo *mp*
And when my voice is

51 *mp*

molto rit. . . . *Tempo primo*

55 *p* *pp*

Mz si - lenced, si - lenced in death,

T si - lenced, si - lenced in death,

55 *p* *pp* *molto rit.* . . . *Tempo primo* *dim.*

Ped.



59 *mp*

Mz my song will speak in your liv - ing heart,

T my song will speak in your liv - ing heart,

S *p* *poco* *p* my song will speak in your liv - ing heart,

A *p* *poco* *p* my song will speak in your liv - ing heart,

T *p* in your liv - ing heart,

B *p* in your liv - ing heart,

59 *pp* *p*

Ped.

64

p *dim.* *pp*
in your liv - ing heart.

p *dim.* *pp*
in your liv - ing heart.

dim. *pp*
in your liv - ing heart.

poco *dim.* *pp*
in your liv - ing heart.

dim. *pp*
in your liv - ing heart.

div. *dim.* *pp*
in your liv - ing heart.

64

rit.
dim. *pp*

68

rit.
dim. *pp*

for perusal only