

**Joan Szymko** (b.1957)

“Joan Szymko has earned a reputation for setting interesting texts with skill and finesse...” — CHORAL JOURNAL. Szymko's music is widely performed in North America, and sung at choral festivals and competitions around the globe. A frequently commissioned composer, she was honored by the American Choral Directors Association as the recipient of the prestigious Raymond W. Brock Memorial Commission for 2010. This SATB piece, "All Works of Love," is available through Santa Barbara Music Publishing, Szymko's primary publisher since 1998. Her music also appears in the catalogs of Roger Dean Music Publishing, *earthsongs*, Treble Clef Press and Yelton Rhodes Music. Szymko also writes for the stage and has enjoyed a creative collaborative relationship with Do Jump! Movement Theater (Portland, Oregon) since 1995. For more information please visit her web site at [www.joanszymko.com](http://www.joanszymko.com)



JOAN SZYMKO

### Notes from the Composer

**Eternal Winter** is a setting of the poem “Holy Thursday” from William Blake's “Songs of Experience.” (1794). The context for the poem is the annual Ascension Thursday service at St Paul's Cathedral (forty days after Easter), when poor and orphaned children from London's Church run charity schools sang as they were paraded into St Paul's for religious services. The tone here is much darker than in Blake's poem of the same name from his “Songs of Innocence,” written five years earlier. He portrays the children's voices not as the angelic singing from “Songs of Innocence,” but rather as a “trembling cry.” The England of Blake's time was the richest, most powerful nation on earth. But in his eyes, “rich and fruitful” Britain is a “land of poverty,” implying that society had turned a blind eye to these children, who will live in an “eternal winter” - perpetually impoverished and destined for a cruel life of “days filled with thorns.”

I set this poem because I was drawn to the powerful metaphors of Blake's “eternal winter,” but also because I was so struck by how time passes and yet how little has changed in regard to society's regard toward childhood poverty. While the poor of Industrialized London most certainly lived in more wretched conditions; the fact is that today, in America, one in five of children under age six live in poverty. The child poverty rate in the USA, the country with the largest economy in the world, is two to three times higher than that of other major industrial nations. (complete poem on page 11)

**Eternal Winter** is one of three settings from Blake's “Songs of Experience” I composed in 2002 for *A CHORAL CONSPIRACY*. Also set: “The Garden of Love” and “The Fly.”

**William Blake** (1757-1827) was an English artist and poet. (pictured on cover). He was born in London and lived much of his life there. From a very early age he was inclined toward painting and poetry. Despite his prolific output he lived in poverty much of his life, as he struggled to make a living as an illustrator and engraver. Blake was a mystic and spoke openly of his visions. Most certainly a nonconformist, he kept company with some of the leading radical thinkers of his day, such as Thomas Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft. He believed in sexual and racial equality and justice for all, and abhorred oppression in all its forms. “*Songs of Innocence and Experience*” is his most popular work. Both books of *Songs* were printed in an illustrated format reminiscent of illuminated manuscripts. The earliest copies were printed and illuminated by Blake himself.

# ETERNAL WINTER

"Holy Thursday" from *Songs of Experience*  
by William Blake (1758-1827)

Joan Szymko

Sop solo

$\text{♩} = 72$  *f* *mf*

Is this a ho - ly thing to see In a rich — and fruit-ful land,

Vc *legato*

6

Babes re-duced to s - - - - - and with co - - - - - a - - - - - u - - - - - hand

*Poco più mosso*

11 *f* *Tutti* *mf* *mp*

S1

Is — that trem - bling cry a song? Can it be — a song of

S2

Is — that trem - bling cry a song? Can it be — a song of

A

Is — that trem - bling cry a song? Can it be — a song of

piano

15

*mf*

joy? And so ma - ny chil - dren poor? It is a

joy? And so ma - ny chil - dren poor? it is a

joy? And so ma - ny chil - dren poor? it is a

vc.

18

*With growing dismay*

**for perusal only**

And their sun does ne - ver shine, And their

land of pov - er - ty! [S1 tacit to M.27]

land of pov - er - ty!

land of pov - er - ty!

*mf*

solo:

21

solo

fields are bleak and bare, And their ways are fill'd with thorns: It is e -

vc. *colla voce*

23

solo

ter-nal win - ter there.

S2 *sempre mf*

A *sempre mf*

And their sun does nev-er shine, And their fields are bleak and bare, And their

And their sun does nev-er shine, And their fields are bleak and bare, And their

vc.

L.H. *p*

*mp*

6 26

solo

It is e - ter - nal win - ter there.

S1

And their

S2

ways are fill'd with thorns: It is e - ter - nal win - ter And their

A

ways are fill'd with thorns: It is e - ter - nal win - ter there.

vc.

for perusal only

28 *mf*

sun does ne - ver shine, And their fields are bleak and bare, And their

sun does ne - ver shine, And their fields are bleak and bare, And their

*mp* *mf*

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35

S1  
ways are fill'd with thorns: It is e - ter - nal win - ter

S2  
ways are fill'd with thorns: It is e - ter - nal win - ter

A  
ways are fill'd with thorns: It is e - ter - nal win - ter

for perusal only

37

solo  
It is e - ter - nal win - ter there. *dim. Slower*

there. It is win - ter there. *dim.*

there. *mf* For where - e're the sun does shine,

there, win - ter there. *dim.*

41 *mf* *poco rit.* *p* solo duet: *mf*

S1 And where-e'er the rain does fall, Babe can ne-ver hun-ger there, Nor

S2 And where-e'er the rain does fall, Babe can ne-ver hun-ger there,

A Babe can ne-ver hun-ger there,

45 *Slower* *Tempo primo* **for perusal only**

pov - er - ty the mind ap - pall. \_\_\_\_\_ end solo

Is this a ho - ly thing to

Is this a ho - ly thing to

Is this a ho - ly thing to



49 *mf* *mp*  
 see In a rich and fruit - ful land,  
*mf* *mp*  
 see In a rich and fruit - ful land,  
*mf* *mp*  
 see In a rich and fruit - ful land,  
*mf* *mf*

**for perusal only**

52 *mf* *rit.*  
 Babes re - duced to mis - er - y, Fed with cold and  
*mf* *rit.*  
 Babes re - duced to mis - er - y, Fed with cold and  
*mf* *rit.*  
 Babes re - duced to mis - er - y, Fed with cold and  
*mp* *rit.* *mf*

55

u - - surous hand?

u - - surous hand?

u - - surous hand?

*rit.*

*mp*

*p*

*p*

**for perusal only**

### Holy Thursday (from "Songs of Experience")

Is this a holy thing to see  
 In a rich and fruitful land.  
 Babes reduced to misery,  
 Fed with cold and usurous hand?

Is that trembling cry a song?  
 Can it be a song of joy?  
 And so many children poor?  
 It is a land of poverty!

And their sun does never shine  
 And their fields are bleak & bare,  
 And their ways are fill'd with thorns:  
 It is eternal winter there.

For where-e'er the sun does shine.  
 And where-e'er the rain does fall,  
 Babe can never hunger there,  
 Nor poverty the mind appall.

- William Blake (1757-1827)

Violoncello

# Eternal Winter

William Blake: "Holy Thursday"  
(1758-1827)

Joan Szymko

♩ = 86

2  
*mp* *mf*

9  
*f* *mf*

20 *colla voce*

23

27  
*f*

31

36 *Slower*  
*mp*

42 *A Tempo* 4  
*p*

51  
*mf* *mp* *mf*

55 *rit.*  
*p* 3