

J O A N S Z Y M K O

LOOK OUT

a setting of poetry by
Wendell Berry

for
SSAA CHORUS
&
piano



JOAN SZYMKO

Joan Szymko's choral music is regularly performed at national and international choral festivals and conferences. Using a familiar music vocabulary, she creates works that are nonetheless fresh and

engaging; compelling and inspiring, her text selections are as notable as her music. Szymko is widely recognized as a prominent composer of exceptional repertoire for women's choir. The American Choral Director's Association recognized Szymko's lasting impact on the choral arts in America by awarding her the prestigious Raymond W. Brock Memorial Commission in 2010.

Szymko lives in the beautiful Pacific Northwest. As resident composer she enjoyed a fruitful collaboration with Portland based *Do Jump! Movement Theater*, (1995-2012) creating vocal underscoring for major touring productions. A dynamic conductor she has served on the choral music faculty of Portland State University (2013-15) and has led *Aurora Chorus* as Artistic Director since 1993. As a visiting artist, Szymko workshops her compositions with choirs in a variety of educational and festival settings across the country and abroad.

Look Out by Wendell Berry

Come to the window, look out, and see
the valley turning green in remembrance
of all springs past and to come, the woods
perfecting with immortal patience
the leaves that are the work of all of time,
the sycamore whose white limbs shed
the history of a man's life with their old bark,
the river quivering under the morning's breath
like the touched skin of a horse, and you will see
also the shadow cast upon it by fire, the war
that lights its way by burning the earth.
Come to your windows, people of the world,
look out at whatever you see wherever you are,
and you will see dancing upon it that shadow.
You will see that your place, wherever it is,
your house, your garden, your shop, your forest, your farm,
bears the shadow of its destruction by war
which is the economy of greed which is plunder
which is the economy of wrath which is fire.

The Lords of War sell the earth to buy fire,
they sell the water and air of life to buy fire.
They are little men grown great by willingness
to drive whatever exists into its perfect absence.
Their intention to destroy any place is solidly founded
upon their willingness to destroy every place.

Every household of the world is at their mercy,
the households of the farmer and the otter and the owl
are at their mercy. They have no mercy.
Having hate, they can have no mercy.
Their greed is the hatred of mercy.
Their pockets jingle with the small change of the poor.
Their power is the willingness to destroy
everything for knowledge which is money
which is power which is victory
which is ashes sown by the wind.

Leave your windows and go out, people of the world,
go into the streets, go into the fields, go into the woods
and along the streams. Go together, go alone.
Say no to the Lords of War which is Money
which is Fire. Say no by saying yes
to the air, to the earth, to the trees,
yes to the grasses, to the rivers, to the birds
and the animals and every living thing, yes
to the small houses, yes to the children. Yes.

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PROGRAM NOTES

Look Out was commissioned by Women in Harmony (Portland, Maine) and premiered at the ensemble's 25th Anniversary concert season finale in May 2018. When asked to supply some comments for the concert program, I wrote the following:

Wendell Berry's poem gave me a vessel in which to pour my grief. Grief at the seemingly bottomless, soulless greed of those who wield power over land, people, governments, information— over the future. But Berry's poem, and the choral setting I created has a long arc, as does history. And so the conclusion of the work is really a beginning— a gathering of energy and of courage — of heart. —Joan Szymko

PERFORMANCE NOTES

This is a work of dramatic intensity. Lean into it. Focus on tone color and articulation to express the shifting timbre of the narrative: pastoral, foreboding, forewarning and finally, an affirmative call to action.

Commissioned by Women in Harmony of Portland, Maine, Catherine Beller-McKenna, Director

Look Out

To cherish what remains of the Earth and to foster its renewal
is our only legitimate hope of survival. – Wendell Berry

Wendell Berry

Joan Szymko

♩=90 tenderly

Pno

mp

5 Unison
S A *mp*

Come to the win-dow, look out, and see the val-ley tur-ning green in re-

9 mem-brance of all springs past and to come, the woods per-fec-ting

13 with im-mor-tal pa-tience the leaves that are the work of all of

4

16 *poco rit.* **A** *mf*

S time, Look out and see, the

A time, Look out and see, the

mf

poco rit. **A**

Ped.

18 *a bit slower* ♩=82

S sy-ca- more_ whose white limbs shed the his-to- ry of a man's life with their old bark, the

A sy-ca- more_ **FOR PERUSAL ONLY** shed the his-to- ry with their old bark, the

a bit slower ♩=82

21 *p* *rit.* *mp*

S riv-er quiv-er-ing un-der the morn-ing's breath_ and you will

S riv-er quiv-er-ing un-der the morn-ing's breath and you will

A riv-er_ *mp* like the touched skin of a horse, and you will

rit.

8va

Ped.

24 **A tempo** *hold back slightly* **Tempo primo** *mf* **poco accel.** *cresc.*

S see al-so the sha-dow_ cast up - on it by fire, the war that lights its

S see al-so the sha-dow_ cast up - on it by fire, the war that lights its

A see_ the sha dow_ cast up-on it by fire, the war that lights its

A tempo **Tempo primo** **poco accel.** *cresc. poco a poco*

FOR PERUSAL ONLY

28 **B** $\text{♩} = 96$

S way by bur - ning the earth.

S way by bur - ning the earth.

A way by bur - ning the earth.

B $\text{♩} = 96$

33 Unison

S
A

Come to your win-dows, peo-ple of the world, look out at what-e-ver you

38

Sop1 *mf*

S
A

see wher-e-ver you are, and you will see

FOR PERUSAL ONLY

42

S

S

A

dan-cing up-on it that sha-dow, dan-cing up-on it that sha-dow,
dan-cing up-on it that sha-dow, dan-cing up-on it that
dan-cing up-on it that sha-dow

46

S dan - cing up - on it that sha - dow, that sha - dow.

S sha - dow that sha - dow.

A dan - cing up - on it that sha - dow, that sha - dow. You will

mp *rit.* *dim.* *mp* *dim.* *mp* *dim.* *p* *dim.*

51 **C** *poco meno mosso* *mp*

A see that your place, where ever it is, your house, your

C *poco meno mosso* *p* *mp*

FOR PERUSAL ONLY

56 *mf* *Più mosso* *f*

S your for - est, your farm, bears the sha - dow of its des -

S your shop, your for - est, your farm, of its de -

A gar - den, your shop, your for - est, your farm, de -

mp *mf* *f* *mf* *Più mosso* *mf* *f* *mf*

62 rit.

S truction by war de - struction by war

S struction de - struction by war

A struction de - struction by war which is the e -

rit.

sub mp

66 =84

solo co - no - my of gree which is plun - der e e - co - no - my of wrath

mp mf

FOR PERUSAL ONLY

=84

71 accel. =96

S which is fire, which is fire.

S which is fire, fire

A Tutti A which is fire, which is fire.

accel. =96

78 **D** *Intense, dramatic, poco marcato* rit.

S S The Lords of War sell the earth to buy fire they sell the wa-ter and air of

A A The Lords of War sell the earth to buy fire they sell the wa-ter and air of

D *Intense, dramatic* rit.

82 *ff* solo *mf*

S S life to buy **FOR PERUSAL**

A A life to buy fire. **ONLY** They are lit - tle men grown great by

ff *mf*

87 *mp* *pp* Tutti A

solo wil-ling-ness to drive what - e - ver ex - ists in - to its per - fect ab - sence. Their in -

mp *p*

91 *mp* *mf* *accel.*

A ten - tion_ to des - troy a - ny place is so - lid - ly foun - ded_ up - on their wil - ling ness_ to de - stroy

cresc. poco a poco *accel.*

95 $\text{♩} = 100$ *f* *rit.*

S ev - ery place._____ ev - ery place._____

S *mf* ev - ery place,_____ ev - ery place._____

A ev - ery place,_____ ev - ery place._____

$\text{♩} = 100$ *f* *rit.* *dim.*

FOR PERUSAL ONLY

99 $\text{♩} = 84$ *tenderly, warm* *mf* Tutti Unison *mf*

S A Ev - ery house - hold of the world is at their mer - cy,_____ the house - holds of the

$\text{♩} = 84$ *mf*

102 *mp*

S A far-mer and the ot-ter and the owl are at their mer cy. They have no

106 *mp* *Tutti* *poco rit.* *p*

S A mer cy. They have no mer-cy. They have no *poco rit.*

FOR PERUSAL ONLY

110 $\text{♩} = 76$ *mp* *legato, with crisp diction*

S A mer-cy. Ha-ving hate, they can have no

115 *mf*

S A mer-cy. Their greed is the ha-tred of mer cy. Their pock-ets jin-gle with the small change of the

accel.

119

S
A

poor. Their pock-ets jin-gle with the small change of the poor.

accel.

F

cresc.

124

S
S

f Più mosso ♩=100 Their po-wer is the wil-ling-ness to des-troy ev-ery thing

A
A

f Più mosso ♩=100 Their po-wer is the wil-ling-ness to des-troy ev-ery thing

ff N.B.

ff N.B.

FOR PERUSAL ONLY

Unrelenting, aggressive

f *ff*

130

S
S

ev - ery thing for know-ledge which is mo - ney_ which is po- wer_ which is vic - to - ry_

A
A

ev - ery thing for know-ledge which is mo - ney_ which is po- wer_ which is vic - to - ry_

rit.

rit.

**LEFT BLANK
INTENTIONALLY**

151 *rit.* *dim.*

S fields, go in-to the woods, go in-to the streets, go in-to the fields, go in - to the *dim.*

A fields, go in-to the woods, go in-to the streets, go in-to the fields, go in - to the

mf

molto rall. ♩=82 *mf* *p* *sub.mf*

S woods and a-long the streams. Go to-geth-er, go

A woods and a-long the streams. Go to-geth-er, go

FOR PERUSAL ONLY

molto rall. ♩=82 *mp* *p* *mf*

160 *poco rit.* *p* // *A tempo* *mf* *f*

S a - lone. Say no to the Lords of War which is

A a - lone. no to the Lords of War which is

poco rit. // *A tempo* *p* *mf* *poco a poco cresc.*

165

S *ff* *poco rit.* *f*
 Mo ney_ which is Fire, which is Fire. Say

A *ff* *f*
 Mo ney_ which is Fire, which is Fire. Say

H 169 *A tempo*

S no by sa - ying yes to the air, to the earth, to the trees,

A no by sa - ying yes to the air, to the earth, to the trees, yes_ to the gras-ses,

H *A tempo*

175

S *mf* *rit.* *Unison mp* *molto rall.* *p*
 yes to the riv- ers,_ to the birds and the a - ni - mals and e - v'ry liv - ing thing,

A *mp* *p*
 to the birds and the a - ni - mals and e - v'ry liv - ing thing,

rit. *molto rall.*

179 $\text{♩} = 76$ rit. A tempo poco rit.

S

A *Gently mp*
yes to the small hou - ses, _____

p mp

183 $\text{♩} = 70$ *mp* *mp*

S yes, yes, yes to the chil-dren.

A **FOR PERUSAL ONLY**

p mp

187 *p* *á 3*

S yes to the chil dren. Yes. _____

A *p* yes to the chil dren. Yes. _____

p