Winner of the University of Minnesota Craig and Janet Swan Composer Prize, May 2005



Songs of Smaller Creatures

SATB div. a cappella, with soprano solo 9 minutes

- 1. the bees' song
- 2. a noiseless, patient spider
- 3. envoi

PERUSAI ONLY (PERFORMANCE PROMIBITED)

PROGRAM NOTE

Songs of Smaller Creatures comprises three short tone-poems for mixed a cappella chorus, each a character study on a small creature from the natural world.

The Bees' Song takes its silly text from British poet Walter de la Mare, who included no less than 33 Z's in his original poem. This setting highlights those sounds, as each part buzzes around looking for a nice cadence on which to land.

A noiseless patient spider, which takes its title and text from Walt Whitman's infamous excerpt from Leaves of Grass, compares the questing soul to a spider who launches forth her own web in order to explore the space around her. Beginning with each of the eight "spider legs" stepping slowly to the edge of a promontory, the voices soon begin the process of weaving a web of their own.

Envoi turns Charles Swinburne's simple text into a flocking of a mass of butterflies. The nonsense syllables propel the piece while providing a subtle flapping of tiny wings, as if the singers are suddenly there in the thick of the migration.

Each movement is dedicated to a close friend of the composer.

AWARDS

Songs of Smaller Creatures was a finalist in the Young New Yorkers' Chorus Young Composers Competition and the first two movements premiered on June 2, 2005 in New York, NY under the direction of Nathan Davis.

In May 2005 the piece received the Craig and Janet Swan Composer Prize from the University of Minnesota, and was premiered in full by the University of Minnesota Chamber Choir under the direction of Kathy Romey on March 26, 2006 at the St. Paul Cathedral, St. Paul, Minnesota.

RECORDING

The full piece was first recorded by the Grant Park Chorus (Christopher Bell, conductor) and released on their album <u>Songs of Smaller Creatures and Other American Choral Works</u> (2012). It is available from Cedille Records, distributed by Naxos.

POEMS

1. The Bees' Song

Thousandz of thornz there be On the Rozez where gozez The Zebra of Zee: Sleek, striped, and hairy, The steed of the Fairy Princess of Zee.

Weighty with blossomz be All the Rozez that growzez In thickets of Zee. And he nozez the poziez Of Rozez that grozez So luvez'm and free.

Thousandz of thornz there be On the Rozez he knowzez Weren't honeyed for he, But to breathe a sweet incense To solace the Princess, Princess of Zee.

- Walter de la Mare (1873-1953)

(edited and adapted by the composer)

2. A noiseless patient spider

A noiseless patient spider I mark'd, where, on a little promontory, it stood, isolated; Mark'd how, to explore the vacant vast surrounding, It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself; Ever unreeling them – ever tirelessly speeding them.

And you, O my Soul, where you stand,
Surrounded, surrounded, in measureless oceans of space,
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing – seeking the spheres, to connect them;
Till the bridge you will need, be form'd – till the ductile anchor hold;
Till the gossamer thread you fling, catch somewhere, O my Soul.

- Walt Whitman (1819-1892)

3. Envoi

Fly, white butterflies, out to sea, Frail, pale wings for the wind to try, Small white wings that we scarce can see, Fly!

Some fly light as a laugh of glee, Some fly soft as a long, low sigh; All to the haven where each would be. Fly!

- Charles Swinburne (1837-1909)

These three poems are in the public domain, and may be reprinted freely in concert programs, liner notes, or any other use pertaining to this musical work.

Songs of Smaller Creatures

1. the bees' song

~ for MjE ~







^{*} The composer realizes that this is a difficult unison. That "wobbliness" is intentional. Please don't hurt yourselves.



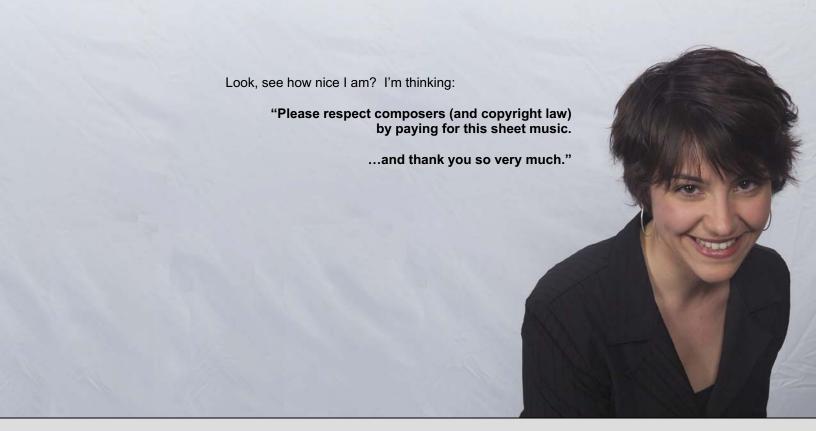


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2. a noiseless, patient spider

~ for jlk ~

Walt Whitman Abbie Betinis





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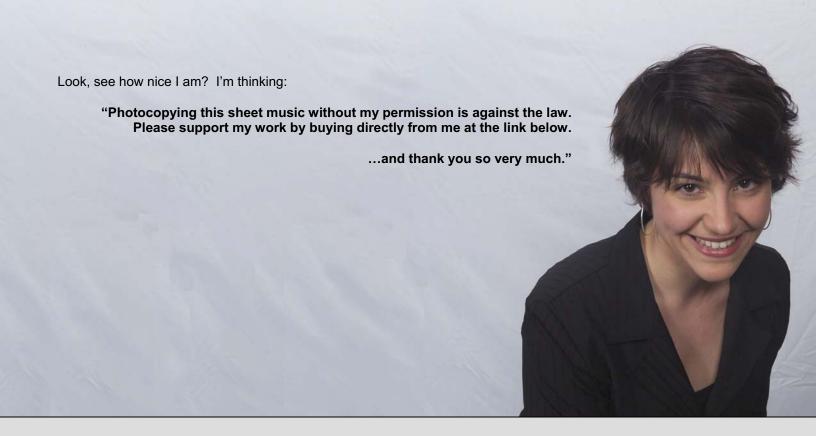


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Songs of Smaller Creatures

3. envoi

~ for KjE ~









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Reviewed as "audacious... edgy and thrilling," the music of Abbie Betinis is being performed increasingly in the United States and abroad. Born in 1980, Abbie has been commissioned by more than 40 music organizations including the Dale Warland Singers, Cantus, The Rose Ensemble, and The Schubert Club. A 2009 McKnight Fellow, she has also won a Jerome Commissioning Grant, the Craig and Janet Swan Composer Prize, and awards from the American Composers Forum, ASCAP, Minnesota Music Educators Association and the Sorel Organization. Ms. Betinis studied composition at St. Olaf College, the University of Minnesota, and the European American Musical Alliance in Paris, France, where faculty from Juilliard and the Paris Conservatory teach harmony and counterpoint in the tradition of Nadia Boulanger. Abbie's music is primarily self-published (Abbie Betinis Music Co) and is distributed internationally, with additional scores published by Fred Bock Music, Graphite Publishing, Kjos, Santa Barbara Music Publishing, and, most recently, in G. Schirmer's Dale Warland Series.

Since 2005, Abbie has been Composer-in-Residence for The Schubert Club. She has also held residencies with The Singers—Minnesota Choral Artists and The Rose Ensemble. A three time cancer survivor, she lives in St. Paul, Minnesota.