

GEORGE PARRIS

SONGS OF NATURE

*three songs for unaccompanied SATB choir
with poems by Ella Higginson*

2021

DURATION

9' (approx.)

- I -

The Opal Sea

- II -

Dream Time

- III -

Four-Leaf Clover

'The Opal Sea'

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An inland sea - blue as sapphire - set
 Within a sparkling, emerald mountain chain
 Where day and night fir-needles sift like rain
Thro' the voluptuous air. The soft winds fret
The waves, and beat them wantonly to foam.
 The golden distances across the sea
 Are shot with rose and purple. Languorously
The silver seabirds in wide circles roam.
The sun drops slowly down the flaming West
 And flings its rays across to set aglow
 The islands rocking on the cool waves' crest
And the great glistening domes of snow on snow.
 And thro' the mist the Olympics flash and float
 Like opals linked around a beating throat.

Four-Leaf Clover

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I know a place where the sun is like gold,
 And the cherry blooms burst with snow,
And down underneath is the loveliest nook,
 Where the four-leaf clovers grow.

One leaf is for hope, and one is for faith,
 And one is for love, you know,
And God put another in for luck -
 If you search, you will find where they grow.

But you must have hope, and you must have faith,
 You must love and be strong - and so -
If you work, if you wait, you will find the place
 Where the four-leaf clovers grow.

Programme Note

The third movement of this collection, *Four-Leaf Clover*, was written in March of 2021 as a stand-alone piece to wish luck and bid farewell to the University of Manchester's music class of 2021; it was premiered the following June in Whitworth Park by eight of those students. The idea to build this work into a collection came from looking at other poetry by the American poet and writer Ella Rhoads Higginson, the themes of humanity and landscape that run through much of her poetry prompted the composition of *The Opal Sea* and *Dream Time*.

Songs of Nature, then, explores both human and environmental nature. *The Opal Sea* focusses on images of the natural world with floating senza misura passages and rolling waves of harmonic colour. *Dream Time* looks at human nature through the distorted window of dreams; the music is anchored in a strophic structure but fluctuating time signatures and major/minor modes give it an ethereal dream-like quality. Finally, *Four-Leaf Clover* combines humanity and the natural world; a very human message of hope conveyed through the imagery of a plant.

Dream Time

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It is the time when crimson stars
 Weary of heaven's cold delight,
And take, like petals from a rose,
 Their soft and hesitating flight
Upon the cool wings of the air
 Across the purple night.

It is the time when silver sails
 Go drifting down the violet sea,
And every poppy's crimson mouth
 Kisses to sleep a lovesick bee;
The fireweed waves her rosy plumes
 On pasture, hill and lea.

It is the time to dream - and feel
 The languid rocking of a boat,
The pushing ripple round the keel
 Where cool, deep-hearted lilies float,
And thro' wild syringas steal
 Some songster's drowsy note.

It is the time, at eve, to lie
 And in a hammock faintly sway,
To watch the golds and crimsons die
 Across the blue stretch of the bay;
To hear the sweet dusk tiptoe by
 In the footsteps of the day.

The Opal Sea

Poems by Ella Higginson

George Parris

Adagio (c. ♩=72) Senza misura

Soprano Solo *Solo mp molto espress.*

An in-land sea, _____ Blue as sap-phire, blue _____ as sap-phire,

Alto *p mp p*

In - land sea,

Tenor *p mp p*

In - land sea,

Bass *p mp p*

In - land sea,

Piano (rehearsal only)

5 Senza misura

S. Solo

Set with-in a spar-k-ling e-mer-ald moun-tain chain,

A. *p mf p*

Blue, _____ Spark - ling,

T. *p mf mp p*

Blue, _____ set with - in,

B. *p mf mp p*

Blue, _____ set with - in,

Pno.

Senza misura

9

S. Solo

Where day and night fir - nee - dles sift like rain.

S.

Tutti *mf*

Thro' the vol - up - tuous air,

A.

mp *mf* *mp* *mf*

Day and night, the vol - up - tuous air,

T.

8

Day and night, vol - up - tuous air,

B.

Day and night, vol - up - tuous air,

Pno.

13

Meno mosso

Adagio

S.

p *mp espress.*

the vol - up - tuous air. The soft winds fret the waves, and beat them wan-ton-ly to foam.

A.

p *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp*

-up - tuous air. Ooo the waves, waves to foam.

T.

8

mp espress.

-up - tuous air. The soft winds fret the waves, and beat them wan-ton-ly to foam.

B.

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

-up - tuous air. Ooo the waves to foam.

Pno.

19

S.

mf Lan-guo-rous-ly the sil - ver sea-birds in wide cir-cles *mp* roam. *ff* *maestoso* The gol-den dis-tan-ces a-cross the

Sil - ver sea - birds in wide cir-cles *mp* roam. *ff* *maestoso* The gol-den dis-tan-ces a-cross the

A.

mf Sil - ver sea - birds *mp* roam. *ff* *maestoso* The gol-den dis-tan-ces a-cross the

Sil - ver sea - birds *mp* roam. *ff* *maestoso* The gol-den dis-tan-ces a-cross the

T.

mf Lan-guo-rous-ly the sil - ver sea-birds in wide cir-cles *mp* roam. *ff* *maestoso* The gol-den dis-tan-ces a-cross the

Sil - ver sea - birds *mp* roam. *f* *maestoso* The gol-den dis-tan-ces a-cross the

B.

mf Sil - ver sea - birds *mp* roam. *f* *maestoso* The gol-den dis-tan-ces a-cross the

Sil - ver sea - birds *mp* roam. *f* *maestoso* The gol-den dis-tan-ces a-cross the

Pno.

Dream Time

Andante Semplice, Hymn-Like

Soprano *mp* *poco* *mf*
It is the time when crim - son stars wea-ry'of hea-ven's cold de light, and take, like pe-tals from a

Alto *mp*
Hmm, hmm, hmm

Tenor *mp*
Crim - son stars hmm, hmm,
(mmm) Hmm, hmm, hmm,

Bass *mp*
(mmm) Hmm, hmm hmm

Piano (rehearsal only)
Andante Semplice, Hymn-Like

6

S. rose, their soft and he-si-ta-ting flight u - pon the cool wings of the air a - cross the pur-ple

A. hmm hmm hmm hmm hmm

T. hmm, hmm, hmm, hmm,

B. hmm, hmm hmm

Pno.

12 *più mp* *mf*

S. night. It is the time when sil - ver sails go drift-ing down the vio - let sea,

A. Sil - ver sails go drift - ing down the sea, And ev-'ry pop-py's crim-son

T. It is the time when sil - ver sails go drift-ing down the vio - let sea, *Ooo,*

B. Sil - ver sails, vio - let sea, *Ooo,*

Pno.

17 *pp* *p* *mp warm*

S. crim-son mouth kis-ses to sleep a love-sick bee; the fire - weed waves on hill and

A. mouth love - sick, love-sick, the fire-weed waves her ro - sy plumes on pas-ture, hill and

T. love - sick bee; the fire - weed waves on pas - ture, hill and

B. love - sick bee; hill and

Pno.

- III -

Four-Leaf Clover

With great fondness (c. ♩=88) *p* *mf* *pp sotto voce*

Soprano
Mmm, know a place, Sun is like

Alto
p *mf* *pp sotto voce*
Ooo, I a place, Sun is like

Tenor
p *mf* *pp sotto voce**
Mmm, know a place, Where the sun is like

Bass
p *mf* *pp sotto voce**
Mmm, I a place, Sun is like

Piano (rehearsal only)
With great fondness (c. ♩=88)

pochiss. rit. . . A tempo

11 *mp*

S. And clo - vers grow. gold, And cher - ries bloom, And four leaf clo - vers grow.

A. *mp*
gold, And cher - ries bloom, And clo - vers grow.

T. *mp*
gold, And cher - ries bloom, And clo - vers grow.

B. *mp*
gold, And cher - ries bloom, And clo - vers grow.

Pno. pochiss. rit. . . A tempo

* Falsetto where appropriate.

19

S. 

A.  *mp* Like gold and the

T.  *mp* I know a place where the sun is like gold, And the

B.  *p* Mmm,

Pno. 

28

S.  *p* *f* *mp* The cher-ries burst with snow. Where the

A.  *f* *mp* *p* cher-ry blooms burst with snow, And down un-der - neath is the lov - li - est nook, Where the

T.  *f* *mp* *p* cher-ry blooms burst with snow, Down un-der - neath is the lov - li - est nook where the

B.  *mp* *f* *mp* *p* Cher - ries burst with snow, Down un - der - neath,

Pno. 

36 *poco rit.* . . . *A tempo*

S. *mp* four leaf clo-vers grow. *mp* One leaf for hope and one for faith, one leaf for hope and *pp*

A. *mp* four leaf clo-vers grow. *mp* One leaf is for hope and one is for faith, one leaf is for hope and *pp*

T. *mp* four, the four leaf clo-vers grow. *mf warmly* I know a

B. *mp* Four leaf clo-vers grow.

Pno. *poco rit.* . . . *A tempo*

45 *mf* and one is for love you know,

S. one for faith, one leaf for hope and one for faith, and one for love, one leaf for

A. one for faith, one leaf for hope and one for faith, and one for love, one leaf for

T. *p like an echo* place where the sun is like gold. And cher - ry blooms

B.

Pno.

54 *pp* *mf*

S. hope and one for faith, one leaf for hope and one for faith, one leaf for hope and one for

A. *pp* *mf*
 hope and one is for faith, one leaf is for hope and one is for faith, one leaf is for hope and one is for

T. burst with snow.

B. *mf pesante*
 And down un - der - neath

Pno.

64 *f* *p hushed*

S. and one is for love you know, — *p hushed*
 faith, one leaf for hope and one for love you know, — And God put a - no-ther in for

A. *f* *p hushed*
 faith, one leaf is for hope and one is for love you know, — *p hushed*
 faith, one leaf is for hope and one is for love you know, — And God put a - no-ther in for

T. *p hushed*
 And God put a - no-ther in for

B. *p hushed*
 is the lov - li - est nook. And God put a - no-ther in for

Pno.