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Duration: 3:45

*premiered by Marjorie Drysdale, Soprano, and Marta Borgstrom, Pianist
at the "Celebration of the Music Makers" Festival, Chandler Hall,
Randolph, Vermont, October 13, 2007*

Program Notes

Mother to Son is based on the powerful poem by Langston Hughes. The mother (voice) is a strong woman, one who has persevered and is still climbing, still surviving: "Well, son, I'll tell you: / Life for me ain't been no crystal stair."

Mother to Son

Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor—
Bare.
But all the time
I've been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's,
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now—
For I've still goin', honey,
I've still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

—Langston Hughes

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Widely performed throughout the country, the music of American composer Gwyneth Walker is beloved by performers and audiences alike for its energy, beauty, reverence, drama, and humor. Dr. Gwyneth Walker (b. 1947) is a graduate of Brown University and the Hartt School of Music. She holds B.A., M.M., and D.M.A. degrees in Music Composition. A former faculty member of the Oberlin College Conservatory, she resigned from academic employment in 1982 in order to pursue a career as a full-time composer. For nearly 30 years, she lived on a dairy farm in Braintree, Vermont. She now divides her time between her childhood hometown of New Canaan, Connecticut, and the musical communities of Sarasota, Florida and Randolph, Vermont.

Gwyneth Walker has been a proud resident of Vermont for many years. She is the recipient of the Year 2000 "Lifetime Achievement Award" from the Vermont Arts Council as well as the 2008 "Athenaeum Award for Achievement in the Arts and Humanities" from the St. Johnsbury (VT) Athenaeum. In 2012, she was elected as a Fellow of the Vermont Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Walker's catalog includes over 300 commissioned works for orchestra, chamber ensembles, chorus, and solo voice. A special interest has been dramatic works that combine music with readings, acting, and movement. The music of Gwyneth Walker is published by E. C. Schirmer (choral and vocal music) and Lauren Keiser Music (orchestral and instrumental music).

Mother to Son

for Soprano and Piano

Langston Hughes

Gwyneth Walker

Freely flowing ♩ = 108, in a blues style

mf

5

8

11

ritard.

With motion ♩ = 120

p

ad lib.

Note setting and format by Gwyneth Walker Music Productions

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15 *p* reflectively, with heaviness

Well, son, I'll tell you:—

15

19

Life for me ain't been no crys - tal stair.

19

23 *mp*

It's had tacks in it, And splin - ters, And

23

27 *mf*

boards_ torn_ up, And pla - ces with no car - pet on the

27 *mp* *mf*

61 *ritard.* **With motion** $\text{♩} = 120$
p
 Don't you fall now For

61 *loco* **With motion** $\text{♩} = 120$
p ritard.
 (Reo.) (Reo.)

65 *accel. cresc.*
 I'se still go - in', hon - ey, I'se still climb - in',

65 *accel. cresc.*
 (Reo. ad lib.)

68 **Quickly** *(cresc.)* **Slower, more freely** *f*
 climb - in', climb - in', climb - in', climb - in', and life for me ain't

68 **Quickly** *(cresc.)* **Slower, more freely**
f (ring through m. 73)
 (Reo.)

72 *ritard.* **With motion** $\text{♩} = 120$ *p*
 been no crys - tal stair.

72 **With motion** $\text{♩} = 120$
ritard. *p* *mf a tempo*
 (Reo.) (Reo.) (Reo. ad lib.)

90 *ritard.* **With motion** ♩ = 120

been no crys - tal, been no crys - tal, been no crys - tal stair.

90 **With motion** ♩ = 120

ritard. (*f*) *a tempo*

(*Leg.*) *Leg. ad lib.*

94 *p*

94 *dim.*

98 *ritard.*

98 *(dim.)* *ritard.*

Leg.

101 (*ritard.*) *p*

Mmm

Ossia

Mmm

101 (*dim. e ritard.*) *pp* *8va*

(*Leg.*)