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*Adapted from the choral version commissioned
and premiered by the Holland (MI) Chorale in 2008*

PROGRAM NOTES

I've Known Rivers is a multi-movement work, comprised of songs based on four different poems by Langston Hughes (1902–1967). Though he lived much of his life in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City, Hughes was born in Missouri and raised in Kansas, Illinois, and Ohio. At age seventeen, he traveled down to Mexico to live with his estranged father.

As he crossed the Mississippi River, he was inspired to write *The Negro Speaks of Rivers*, which begins “I’ve known rivers. . . .” and is the text for the first movement, “My Soul Has Grown Deep.” It reflects upon rivers of historic and geographical importance—the Euphrates, Congo, Nile, and Mississippi. As the rivers have endured over time, so has the human soul. The waters—the blood—runs deep.

In contrast to the universal message of the first song, “Troubled Water,” which uses the poetry of the same title, is contemporary and personal. Water becomes an image of the unsettled and uncertain nature of love. The journey of love is a journey of troubled water. There is no resolution.

Undaunted by the elusive nature of love, the poet, heard via the chorus, turns flippant, displaying a persevering and humorous outlook in “Jump Right In!” (to the river) from Hughes’ poem *Life is Fine*. Romantic misadventures will not conquer the spirit. “I could’ve died for love, but for livin’ I was born.”

“In time of silver rain,” once more using the poem of the same title, is a song of healing. With the regeneration of spring, the poet marvels at the wonder of life.

Though intended to be performed as the complete multi-movement work *I've Known Rivers*, each song may be performed separately. Duration: 12:00.

—Gwyneth Walker

AVAILABLE EDITIONS

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| SATB Chorus and Piano OR opt. Percussion and String Orchestra | <i>Piano/Choral Score</i> | <i>Full Score</i> | <i>Instrumental Parts</i> |
| 1. My Soul Has Grown Deep | 7281 | 7281A | 7281B |
| 2. Troubled Water | 7282 | 7282A | 7282B |
| 3. Jump Right In! | 7283 | 7283A | 7283B |
| 4. In time of silver rain | 7284 | 7284A | 7284B |
| TTBB Chorus and Piano | <i>Piano/Choral Score</i> | | |
| 1. My Soul Has Grown Deep | 7297 | | |
| 2. Troubled Water | 7298 | | |
| 3. Jump Right In! | 7299 | | |
| 4. In time of silver rain | 7300 | | |
| Tenor Solo and Piano | <i>Piano/Vocal Score</i> | | |
| I've Known Rivers | 8825 | | |
| Baritone Solo and Piano | <i>Piano/Vocal Score</i> | | |
| I've Known Rivers | 8826 | | |

I've Known Rivers

for Tenor Solo and Piano

My Soul Has Grown Deep

Langston Hughes (1902–1967)

Gwyneth Walker (ASCAP)

Gently flowing ♩ = 108

Piano

mf *p* *mf*

Ped. Ped.

4

p *mf* *p*

(Ped.) Ped.

7

mf *p*

Ped. Ped.

10

A *p* evoking the magic and mystery of rivers

I've known riv - ers:

A

Ped. *simile*

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13

I've known

16

riv - - - ers:

19

B

(p)

poco rit.

I've known riv - ers an - cient as the world and old - er than the flow of hu - man

B

poco rit.

22

Slower

blood in hu - man veins. My soul has grown deep like the

Ped.

26 *a tempo* (♩ = 108)

8 riv - ers. Ah,

a tempo (♩ = 108)

Red. *simile*

29 *mf* [C]

8 I bathed in the Eu - phra - tes when dawns were young.

cresc. *mf* [C]

32

8 I built my hut near the Con - go and it

[C]

35

8 lulled me to sleep. I looked up - on the Nile

[D]

Troubled Water

Langston Hughes (1902–1967)

Gwyneth Walker (ASCAP)

Flowing ♩ = 120

p gently

mf cantabile

Be - tween us, al - ways,

mf

loved one, there lies this trou - bled wa - ter.

You are my sky, my

mf

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21

shin - ing sun O - ver trou - bled wa - - - - - ter.

p

Ped. _____ Ped. _____

26

You are my sky, my shin - ing sun o - ver

mf

mf

Ped. _____

32

trou - bled wa - - - - - ter. I

p

rit. *mf*

p *rit.*

Ped. _____

37

D Slower *quasi recitativo* , *p* (as a commentary) , *mf*

jour - ney far to touch your hand. The trip is trou - bled wa - ter. We

D Slower *quasi recitativo*

mf *p*

Jump Right In!

Langston Hughes (1902–1967)

Gwyneth Walker (ASCAP)

With energy ♩ = 120

f *gliss.*

4 *f* *boisterously*

I went down to the riv-er, I set down on the bank. I

7 [loud hand clap]

tried to think but could - n't, so I jumped up and sank. I came up once and hol - lered! I

10

came up twice and cried! If that wa - ter had - n't a - been so * cold I

Ped.

* *Ossia* if needed

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B

13

(Opt.)

might-'ve sunk and died. _____ But it was cold in that wa - ter!

B

gliss.

(Opt.) humorous falsetto

16

It was cold!

(Piano accompaniment for measures 16-17)

[Finger snaps]

19

sing f

C

ch ch ch ch ch I took the el - e - va - tor six - teen

[opt. vocal sounds]

C

(Piano accompaniment for measures 19-21)

22

floors a - bove the ground. I thought a - bout my ba - by and I thought I would jump down. _____ I

(Piano accompaniment for measures 22-24)

In time of silver rain

Langston Hughes (1902–1967)

Gwyneth Walker (ASCAP)

At a peaceful tempo ♩ = 92

blurred and shimmering, as silver rain

p

Ped. *simile*

p peacefully

In

time of silver rain,

in time of silver rain,

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9

the earth puts forth new

11

life a - gain,

13

green grass - es grow and

B

15

flow - ers lift their heads, and o - ver all the plain the

rit. Slower

rit. Slower

8va