

Pamela J. Marshall

Sky's Mirror



voice and cello

Spindrift Music Company

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Sky's Mirror

for soprano or tenor and cello
by Pamela J. Marshall

text adapted from *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau

Contents

Preview version: Score

Full version: Score - to be printed twice. Performers play from score.

Notes

Sky's Mirror reflects a long-standing affection for the images in the book *Walden*. However, after mulling over certain passages for a few years and trying to envision setting them as a song, I realized that wasn't going to express the feelings I have about the book and the place. I realized that a fragmented approach to the text would more effectively convey the fragility of the place and the aggressive protectiveness I feel for all natural places.

A version of the text I used with more continuity (i.e., complete phrases and sentences) is printed in the score so the singer will have a better sense of where the words come from. To the serenity of Thoreau's descriptions, I have added my own ironic twists by the context and repetition. "Nothing so fair, so pure, and at the same time so large, as a lake, perchance, lies on the surface of the earth. Sky water. Nations come and go without defiling it. It is a mirror that no stone can crack, . . . whose gilding Nature continually repairs" So it seemed to Thoreau, but we cannot continue to believe it.

- > Composed in 1991
- > Duration approximately 10 minutes
- > Premiered by Nancy Slaughter and David Vanderkooi on the New Directions concert series at Austin Peay University, Clarksville, TN in April 1998
- > Recorded by D'Anna Fortunato and Emmanuel Feldman on the CD "Noises, Sounds & Strange Airs" on the Clique Track label in May 1993

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From Walden by Henry David Thoreau

. . . How peaceful the phenomena of the lake! Every motion of an oar or an insect produces a flash of light; and if an oar falls, how sweet the echo!

In such a day, in September or October, Walden is a perfect forest mirror, set round with stones as precious to my eye as if fewer or rarer. Nothing so fair, so pure, and at the same time so large, as a lake, perchance, lies on the surface of the earth. Sky water. It needs no fence. Nations come and go without defiling it. It is a mirror that no stone can crack, whose quicksilver will never wear off, whose gilding Nature continually repairs; no storms, no dust, can dim its surface ever fresh;—a mirror in which all impurity presented to it sinks, swept and dusted by the sun's hazy brush, . . . which retains no breath that is breathed on it, but sends its own to float as clouds high above its surface, and be reflected in its bosom still.

The indescribable innocence and beneficence of Nature,—of sun and wind and rain, of summer and winter,—such health, such cheer, they afford forever! And such sympathy have they ever with our race, that all Nature would be affected and the sun's brightness fade, and the winds would sigh humanely, and the clouds rain tears, and the woods shed their leaves and put on mourning in midsummer, if any man should ever for a just cause grieve. Shall I not have intelligence with the earth? Am I not partly leaves and vegetable mould myself?

. . . For my panacea, . . . let me have a draught of undiluted morning air. Morning air! If men will not drink of this at the fountain-head of the day, why then, we must even bottle up some and sell it in the shops, for the benefit of those who have lost their subscription ticket to morning time in this world.

This is a delicious evening, when the whole body is one sense, and imbibes delight through every pore. . . . As I walk along the stony shore of the pond in my shirt-sleeves, though it is cool as well as cloudy and windy, and I see nothing special to attract me, all the elements are unusually congenial to me. The bull frogs trump to usher in the night and the note of the whippoorwill is borne on the rippling wind from over the water. Sympathy with the fluttering alder and poplar leaves almost takes away my breath; yet, like the lake, my serenity is rippled but not ruffled.

Sometimes, on Sundays, I heard the bells, the Lincoln, Acton, Bedford, or Concord bell, when the wind was favorable, a faint, sweet, and as it were, natural melody, worth importing into the wilderness. At a sufficient distance over the woods this sound acquires a certain vibratory hum, as if the pine needles in the horizon were the strings of a harp which it swept. . . . All sound heard at the greatest possible distance produces one and the same effect, a vibration of the universal lyre, just as the intervening atmosphere makes a distant ridge of earth interesting to our eyes by the azure tint it imparts to it. There came to me in this case a melody which the air had strained, and which had conversed with every leaf and needle of the wood, that portion of the sound which the elements had taken up and modulated and echoed from vale to vale. The echo is to some extent, an original sound, and therein is the magic and charm of it. It is not merely a repetition of what was worth repeating in the bell, but partly the voice of the wood; the same trivial words and notes sung by a wood-nymph.

Sky's Mirror

for Soprano and Cello by Pamela J. Marshall
text adapted from Thoreau's Walden

Note: In unmeasured sections, indicated by a time signature of 0, the cello should keep pace with the voice without strict synchronization, except where marked with vertical bars above and below the system.

$\text{♩} = 86$ Aggressively, heavily accented

(H)oh (h)oh ah ah ah. (H)oh (h)oh(h)oh oh ah ah ah.

mf *f* *mf*

f *mf* *f* *mf*

mf *espressivo* (but still aggressive)

Mir-ror, ah. Smooth mir-ror, ah. Smooth wa-ter, mir-ror.

espressivo *mf*

Per-fect mir-ror. Ah, so smooth. Un-de-filed.

ff *ff*

Ah, so fair. Sky wa-ter. Ah, Wal-den. So it seems.

mp *mf* *mp* *mf*

A *mp* lyrical

Fair, smooth, pure. Seems fair, seems pure.

mp

mf *mp*

Hu- man will not de- file this lake, Wal- den.

mf *mp*

mp

Noth- ing so fair. Noth- ing so pure,

p

mp

yet so large, lives on the earth. Liv- ing on the earth.

mp

p **B**

Live, live on earth.

p *mf*

$\text{♩} = 72$
solo, deliberately

mp *pp* *repeat, ad lib. morendo*

Sky Wa-ter. Wa Wa

mf *mp*

Ad libitum, delicato (♩ = 60)
(rit.)

Mir-ror that no stone can crack. Bree-zes, rip- ples, smooth a- gain.

p *mp*

C ♩ = 90 (with portamento)

Flash of light, the sur- face sparkles. Ev'- ry sound how

p

diminuendo

sweet the e-cho. Sweet e- cho e- cho, e-cho, e-cho. Lake

p *diminuendo*

With irony ♩ = 100

Of sun, and wind, and rain. In-nocence.

Health. Summer, and winter. Cheer.

Hesitantly ♩ = 72

Morn-ing air heals. Na-ture is our hea-ler. We grieve, Na-ture grieves too.

con moto (but with sadness)

For each glissando, change from slow to fast tremolo and from ordinary bow position to sul ponticello

III, IV

gl. gl. gl. sul IV

D Allegro marcato ♩ = 168

Sun fade, sun fade, wind sigh, sigh. simile, con accento

Clouds rain, tears rain, tears. Just

cause? Who grieves? who? who? who?

E *mp* *crescendo poco a poco*
 Woods shed leaves. They mourn in mid-summer,

p mp crescendo poco a poco

mid-summer. Shed leaves, mourn, shed tears. Clouds rain, rain

tears. I am crying. Nature cries, fading,

ff *diminuendo*

sigh- ing. Who grieves? Who can de-

ff *diminuendo*

morendo

file, so fair, pure, de- filed.

pp

F Andante ♩ = 66

De- licious eve- ning

mp *gl.*

Be- side the lake, clou- dy and win- dy, but se- rene. Rip- pled, but

f *f*

Meno mosso *p* *f* *p* *con moto* *mp*

not ruf- fled. Sky's mir- ror. I hear bells, (glissando)

p *f* *p* *con moto* *mp* *gl.* *gl.* *gl.* *pp* *IV*

mp **G** Andante con moto

eve-ning thru- shes. Bull- frogs troonk,

mp

pp

troonk. Whip- poor- whill e- choes, oh, e- choes in the

pp *sul tasto*

H Calmato ♩ = 66 *mp espressivo*

night. Fair, smooth

mp espressivo *ordinario*

lake. I hear bells, bells, bells.

ppp *mp*

I hear e- cho, ma- gic bells.

espressivo

p cantabile

Voice of the woods, notes sung, notes sung by a nymph.

p

mp

Notes that the air has strained and echoed, echoed by the

mp *p*

mf risoluto

shore. Perfect mirror, undefiled.

mf risoluto