

BIRDING IN WINTER

for SATB Chorus

by Pamela J. Marshall



Birding in Winter

by Susan Edwards Richmond

Empty yourself of expectation,
the flutter of common creatures.
Nothing will be close.

Leave behind pencil and list.
But keep the book.
Be sure your layers match the earth—

silk sheath for ice,
wool for snow,
down for air,

master the cold
with the same firm hands
your raise each year to the spring.

Then be prepared
to stand immobile for hours
in the snow fields

where the temperatures
hover lower
than a harrier's flight.

Be prepared to read nothing
but patterns, configurations, the absence
of color in coverts and wings.

Go alone if you can,
or with someone who shares
your aptitude for patience,

someone who can gather in
her own silence, as the scope
pans ice floes, as the flocks recede

and the air
at the edges of sight
shimmers and shimmers.

"Birding in Winter" from *Birding in Winter*, poems by
Susan Edwards Richmond, Finishing Line Press, 2006.
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www.susanedwardsrichmond.com/

Cover design by Kathy Galdi.

Notes

I've been enchanted by Susan's poem for years, waiting for the opportunity and the ensemble that could help me turn it into music. It expresses so well the cold necessities of birding in wintertime, with a subtle undercurrent of why we birdwatchers would put up with winter cold for the thrill of a sighting, whether it's an unusual bird or an ordinary bird found in a special place.

Mostly, the music follows the rhythm of the spoken words. My setting alternates between big declarative moments and textures to evoke a mood. The declarations might slip in and out of unison/octaves ("master the cold..."). The textural sections vary between almost modal with chromatic inflections (for example, "nothing but patterns,...") and more chromatic (the descending version of "silk sheath for ice..."). In the end, the snow and ice and feelings of cold dissolve in a musical texture of shimmering light.

Birding in Winter is for SATB chorus, with a soprano divisi passage and brief solo passages near the end, which could be sung as a section. Although intended to be acapella, you can use supporting doubling with piano, in full or just occasional supporting notes.

The music was premiered in November 2019 in Somerville and Cambridge, MA, USA by Triad: Boston's Choral Collective, conducted by Charles Turner. (triadchoir.org)

In 2021, *Birding in Winter* was accepted into Project : Encore, which promotes subsequent performances for choral music that has been premiered. (projectencore.org)

Birding in Winter

Susan Edwards Richmond

Pamela J. Marshall

Moderato ♩=132 (♩=66)
mp

SOPRANO
Emp-ty your-self of ex-pec - ta - tion, The flut - ter o(f) —

ALTO
Emp-ty your-self of ex-pec - ta - tion, The flut - ter of —

TENOR
mp
of ex - pec - ta - tion,

BASS
mp
of ex - pec - ta - tion,

Moderato ♩=132 (♩=66)
mp

Piano (rehearsal)

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7

S. flut - ter of com - mon crea - tures. flut -

A. com - mon crea - tures. flut - ter, flut -

T. com-mon crea - tures. flut - ter,

B. com-mon crea - tures, of com - mon

Pno. (reh)

12

S. -ter No-thing will be close.

A. -ter No-thing will be close.

T. flut - ter No-thing will be close.

B. crea - tures. No-thing will be close, close.

Pno. (reh)

mf *mf* *mf* *mf* *pp* *mf* *pp*

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A

20

S. *p* mm _____ But keep_ the book.____ *pp* mm.____

A. *mf* Leave be-hind pen-cil and_ list. But keep_ the book.____ *pp* mm.____

T. *mp* Leave pen-cil and_ list. But keep_ the book____ *pp* mm.____

B. *mf* Leave be-hind pen - cil and list. But_ keep the book____ *pp* mm.____

Pno. (reh) *mf* **A** *pp*

B

27

S. *f* Be sure your lay - ers match the earth.____ silk sheath for ice, wool for

A. *f* Be sure your lay - ers match the earth.____ silk sheath for ice, wool for

T. *f* Be sure your lay - ers match the earth.____ wool for

B. *f* Be sure your lay - ers match the earth.____ Silk,____ silk for ice,

Pno. (reh) *f* **B**

Birding in Winter

34

S. snow, down for air, silk sheath for ice, wool for

A. snow, down for air, silk sheath for ice, wool for

T. snow, down for air,

B. wool for snow, down for air, silk for ice, wool for

Pno. (reh)

38

S. snow, down for air, ah, mas-ter the cold with the same firm hands that you

A. snow, down for air, ah, mas-ter the cold with the same firm hands that you

T. oh, down for air, mas-ter the cold with the same firm hands that you

B. snow, down for air, ah, mas-ter the cold with the same firm hands that you

Pno. (reh)

Birding in Winter

42

C *mp* *p*

S. raise each year to the spring. Then be pre-pared to stand im-mo-bile, stand for hours,

A. raise each year to the spring. Then be pre-pared to stand im-mo-bile, stand

T. raise each year to the spring. Then be pre-pared to stand stand

B. raise each year to the spring.

Pno. (reh)

47

S. in the snow fields, stand im - mo - bile

A. im - - - - - mo - - - - -

T. stand im - mo - bile, in the snow fields,

B. where the temp - p'ra - tures ho - ver low - er

Pno. (reh)

Birding in Winter

49 *mf*

S. for hours

A. bile

T. *mf*
low - er than a har - ri - er's flight.

B. *mf*
than a har - ri - er's flight.

Pno. (reh)

51 **D** *f* *mp*

S. *f* Be_ pre - pared to read_ no-thing but pat - terns, con - fig - ur -

A. *f* *mp*
Be_ pre - pared to read_ no-thing but pat - terns, con - fig - ur - a - tions,

T. *f* *mp*
Be_ pre - pared to read_ no-thing but pat - terns, con - fig - ur -

B. *f* *mp*
Be_ pre - pared Ah

Pno. (reh) **D**

Birding in Winter

56

S. *pp*
ra - tions, pat - terns, Ah mm

A. *mf* 3
pat - terns, the ab - sence of col - or in co - verts and wings.

T. *pp*
ra - tions, pat - terns con - fig - ur - ra - tions...mm

B. *pp*
ah ah ah mm

Pno. (reh) *mf* 3

61 **E**

S. *mp*
Go a - lone if you can, or with some - one who shares

A. *mp*
Go a - lone if you can, some - one

T. *mp*
Go a - lone some - one

B. *mp*
Go a - lone if you can, some - one

Pno. (reh) **E** *mp*

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66

S. *mf* *p*
 — your ap-ti tude for pa-tience, some-one who can ga-ther in her own si -

A. *mf* *p*
 — some - one some-one who can ga-ther in her own si -

T. *mf* *p*
 — some - one some-one who can ga-ther in her own si

B. *mf* *p*
 — some - one some-one who can ga-ther in her own si

Pno. (reh) *mf* *p*

73

S. *ppp* *mp* solo (with alto)
 lence, as the scope pans ice floes,

A. *ppp* *mp* solo 1 solo 2 (with tenor)
 lence, as the scope pans ice floes, as the flocks re - cede

T. *ppp* *mp* solo
 lence, as the flocks re - cede

B. *ppp* *mp* solo
 lence, and the air

Pno. (reh) *ppp* *mp*

78 **F** *mp*

S. shim-mer, shim-mer,

A. shim-mer, shim-mer,

T. shim-mer, shim-mer and shim-mer,

B. *tutti mp*
at the ed-ges of sight shim-mers.

Pno. (reh) **F** *mp*

82

S. shim - mer shim - mer and shim - mer ah shim - mer

A. shim - mer shim - mer ah

T. shim - mer ah

B. shim - mer ah ah

Pno. (reh)

Birding in Winter

85

S. and shim-mer, ah ah ah

A. ah ah ah

T. ah ah ah

B. ah ah ah

Pno. (reh)

poco rit.

88 *mf*

S. ah ah ah

A. *mf* ah ah ah

T. *mf* ah ah ah

B. *mf* ah ah

Pno. (reh) poco rit.

90 *poco rit.*

S. *p*
ah mm

A. *p*
ah mm

T. *p*
ah mm

B. *p*
ah mm

poco rit.

Pno. (reh)

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Selected Music by Pamela J. Marshall

Orchestra

Triptoe Suite (2222-4221, 1pc, timp, strings) in 4 mvts
Through the Mist (2222-2220, harp, 3pc, timp, strings) in 3 mvts
A chill wind in autumn (solo voice, 2222-4221-3pc, strings)
Traditional Christmas (treble chorus or soloist, 2222-4221, harp, 3pc, timp, strings)
Three Appalachian Carols (2222-4231, harp, 2pc, timp, strings)

Keyboard

Suite for harpsichord or piano
For piano: Daydream, Stomp, Imagine That Time Stops
Wordless Prayer for piano or organ
Playbook (Pacem Student Composing Project) for piano

Chorus & Solo Voice

Deepest Shade for SATB chorus
The Future of Life for SATB chorus, trombone, piano
Shepherds and Angels for SATB chorus, violin, harp, tamborine
Songs from a Quaker Heart for SATB chorus, piano
Weaving the World for SATB chorus, oboe, piano
Windshine for SATB chorus and cello
Wordless Prayer for SATB chorus

The Bee Song for SSAA or SATB chorus, piano
Grand grand mother is returning for SSAA or SATB chorus, piano
How Spiders Came to Hawaii for SATB, trombone, piano

Body and Soul Vol.1 for mezzo-soprano and string trio
Body and Soul Vol.2 for soprano, flute, cello, piano
Ariel's Songs for high or medium voice and piano
Remember the Old Songs for high voice and piano
Sky's Mirror for voice and cello
A chill wind in autumn for voice and piano

Strings

Arcanum for solo violin, Soliloquy for solo cello
Elusive Sleep for cello and piano
Pascal's Theorems for cello and doublebass
Truth Becoming for string quartet
Soliloquy for cello
Rising for viola
Quinteto sobre las poemas de Carlos Pintado for violin, viola, cello, doublebass, piano
Through the Mist for flute, violin, harp or guitar

Winds & Brass

Poetry-Inspired solos for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn
Enchanted for oboe and chamber orchestra or piano
Wanderer for brass quintet
Resonances for alto saxophone, trumpet, 2 trombones, percussion
Waves and Fountains for oboe, horn, piano
"wild horn whose voice the woodland fills" for 8 horns
Black Bear Dance for horn quartet (or choir) and drums
Zoa for flute and harp

Recordings

Through the Mist on Ravello Records: chamber music for winds, strings, harp
Visit www.spindrift.com for complete list. Demos available for many titles

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