

# The Three Mysteries

- 1) *The Heart Could Never Speak*
- 2) *Song*
- 3) *If I Could Know*

**Music by Ken Johnston  
to poems by Edwin Muir**

**for SAB voices and piano**

This version for SAB voices and piano composed 1994  
and revised 2002

**Duration of individual songs:** 1) 4'    2) 3'    3) 4' 30"

Versions of this piece are also available for the following voice combinations:

SATB  
SSA (or SAA)

## Some notes on Edwin Muir and his poetry

Edwin Muir was born in Orkney in 1887. He died in 1959.

The title, *The Three Mysteries* does not refer to these three poems as such, but rather to Edwin Muir's preoccupation and pursuit in much of his work of what he called the three 'mysteries' of life – where we come from, where we are going, and how we should live with one another.

He is trying to make us more fully aware of the nature of human life: what it is and what it could be, in both positive and negative terms.

One of his favourite techniques is the communication of a paradoxical or not readily reconcilable concept through his linking of opposing elements; for example - 'is and is not my own'; 'a giving be our taking'; 'a making our unmaking'.

# The Three Mysteries

## 1) The Heart Could Never Speak

Poem -  
Edwin Muir

for SAB voices and piano

Music -  
Ken Johnston

**Dreamily** ♩ = 72

Pno

*p*

*Ped.*

6

*poco cresc.*

*Ped.* (sim.)

11

*poco rit.*

**A little faster than opening** ♩ = 78

*mp*

*Ped.* (sim.)

16

*poco rit.*

*Ped.* *Ped.*

21

**A tempo**

*p*

S  
A

SA unis. The heart could ne-ver speak But that the Word was spo-ken...

**A tempo**

*p*

*Ped.* *Ped.* (sim.)

Duration: 4'

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25

S  
A

*mp*

SA div.

We hear the heart break Here with hearts un-bro- ken. Time, teach us the

30

S  
A

art That breaks and heals the heart. Time, teach us the art That

35

S  
A

*mp*

SA unis.

breaks and heals the heart. Heart, you would be dumb

B

*mp*

Heart, you would be dumb

*mp*

Ped.

40

S  
A

But that your word was said In time, and the e- choes come Throng- ing from the

B

But that your word was said In time, and the e- choes come Throng- ing from the

45 *mf*

S  
A  
B

SA div.

dead. Time, teach us the art That re-sur-rects the heart.

dead. Time, teach us the art That re-sur-rects the heart

*mf*

50 *mf* **poco rit.**

S  
A  
B

Time, teach us the art That re-sur-rects the heart.

Time, teach us the art That re-sur-rects the heart.

*mf* **poco rit.**

*Ped.*

55 **A little slower** ♩ = 72 **poco rit.**

S  
A  
B

*mp*

Tongue, you can on - ly say Syl-la- bles, joy and pain, Till

*mp*

Tongue, you can on - ly say Syl-la- bles, joy and pain, Till

*mp*

you can say Syl-la- bles, joy and pain, Till

**A little slower** ♩ = 72 **poco rit.**

*mp*

*Ped.* (sim.)

59 **A tempo**

S time, ha - ving its way, Makes the word

A time, ha - ving its way, Makes the

B time, ha - ving its way,

**A tempo**

62 **rit.** **A little faster** ♩ = 78

S live a - gain. Time, mer - ci - ful lord, Grant us to

A word live a - gain. Time, mer - ci - ful lord, Grant us to

B Makes the word live a - gain. Time, mer - ci - ful lord, Grant us to

**rit.** **A little faster** ♩ = 78

66

S learn your word. Time, mer-ci-ful lord, Grant us to learn your word.

A learn your word. Time, mer-ci-ful lord, Grant us to learn your word.

B learn your word. Time, mer-ci-ful lord, Grant us to learn your word.

71 **molto rit.** **A tempo**

S Grant us to learn your word. ah

A Grant us to learn. ah ah

B

**molto rit.** **A tempo**

77

S ah

A ah

*cresc. poco a poco*

*cresc. poco a poco*

*cresc. poco a poco*

83

S *poco rit.* (no breath)  
ah

A (no breath)  
ah

B *mp cresc. poco a poco* (no breath)  
ah

88

S *A tempo f*  
Time, mer-ci-ful lord, Grant us\_ to learn your word. Time, mer-ci-ful

A *f*  
Time, mer-ci-ful lord,— Grant us to learn your word. Time, mer-ci-ful

B *f*  
Time, mer-ci-ful lord, Grant us to learn your word. Time, mer-ci-ful

*A tempo f*

93 *molto dim.*

S lord, Grant us to learn your word.

A lord, Grant us to learn your word.

B lord, Grant us to learn your word.

*molto dim.*

96 **molto rit.** **Slowly** ♩ = 52

S *p* 3 Grant us to learn.

A *p* 3 Grant us to learn.

B *p* 3 Grant us to learn.

**molto rit.** **Slowly** ♩ = 52

*p*

# The Three Mysteries

## 2) Song

9

Poem -  
Edwin Muir

for SAB voices and piano

Music -  
Ken Johnston

Flowing  $\text{♩} = 168$

Piano accompaniment (Pno) for measures 1-15, featuring a flowing melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The tempo is marked *Flowing* with a quarter note equal to 168 beats per minute. The music is in a key with three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 10/8 time signature. Dynamic markings include *mp* and *Ped.* with a *(sim.)* instruction. Pedal markings include *(LH over)* and *(LH under)*.

Vocal parts (SAB) enter at measure 16. The Soprano (S) and Alto (A) parts are marked *SA unis. mp*. The lyrics are: "This that I give and". The Bass (B) part also has a *mp* dynamic marking.

Duration: 3'

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19

S  
A

take, This that I keep and break,

B

(LH under) (LH over) (LH under)

22

S  
A

Is and is not my own But lives in it-self a -

B

(LH over) (LH under) (LH over)

25

S  
A

*mf* SA div.  
lone. Yet is be-tween us two, Mine on - ly in the

B

(LH under) *mf* Ped. (sim.)

29

S  
A

brea - king, It all in the re - ma - king, Doing what I un -

33

S  
A  
do. Yet is be-tween us two, Mine

B  
Yet is be-tween us

*cresc.* *f*

Ped. Ped. (sim.) Ped. (sim.)

38

S  
A  
on - ly in the brea - king, It all in the re - ma - king,

B  
two, Mine on - ly in the brea - king, It all in the re -

42

*molto dim.* *p* **Calm, and a little slower** ♩ = 160

S  
A  
Doing what I un - do.

B  
*molto dim.* *p* ma - king, I un - do.

*molto dim.* *p* **Calm, and a little slower** ♩ = 160

(LH over)  
Ped. Ped. (sim.)

45

S  
A

SA unis. *p*

With it all must be

B

Detailed description: This system covers measures 45 to 47. The vocal parts (Soprano and Alto) are in unison, playing a sustained chord. The Bass part has a whole note rest. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand and half notes in the left hand.

48

S  
A

well, There where the in - vi - si - ble Loom

Detailed description: This system covers measures 48 to 50. The vocal parts (Soprano and Alto) sing the lyrics 'well, There where the in - vi - si - ble Loom'. The Bass part continues with a whole note rest. The piano accompaniment continues with the same rhythmic pattern as in the previous system.

51

S  
A

sweet - ly plies its trade. All made there is

Detailed description: This system covers measures 51 to 53. The vocal parts (Soprano and Alto) sing the lyrics 'sweet - ly plies its trade. All made there is'. The Bass part continues with a whole note rest. The piano accompaniment continues with the same rhythmic pattern as in the previous system.

54

S  
A

well - made.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 54 to 56. The vocal parts (Soprano and Alto) sing the lyrics 'well - made.'. The Bass part continues with a whole note rest. The piano accompaniment continues with the same rhythmic pattern as in the previous system.

57

S  
A

SA div. *pp*

B *p*

With it all must be well, There where the in -

60

S  
A

B

vi - si - ble Loom sweet - ly plies its trade.

(LH under)

63

S  
A

*p*

All made there is

B

All made there is well - made.

(LH over) (LH under) (LH over)

66

S  
A

well - made. oo

B

All made there is well - made.

*p*

*mp*

*cresc.*

(LH under) (LH under) (LH over)

69

S  
A

All made there is well - made. So be it be - tween us

B

*mp* *mf*

**Primo tempo** ♩ = 168

*mf*

(LH under) (LH over)

72

S  
A

two; A gi - ving be our ta - king, A ma - king our un -

*p*

76

S  
A

ma - king, A doing what we un - do.

*cresc.*

80 *f*

S  
A

So be it be - tween us two; A gi - ving be our

B

So be it be - tween us two; A

84 *molto dim.*

S  
A

ta - king, A ma - king our un - ma - king, A doing what we un -

B

gi - ving be our ta - king, A ma - king our un - ma - king, we un -

88 *mp*

S  
A

do.

B

do.

(LH over) (LH under) (LH over)

91 *mp*

S  
A

SA unis. This that I give and take,

B

(LH under) (LH over) (LH under)

94

S  
A  
B

This that I keep and break, Is and is not my

(LH over) (LH under) (LH over)

SA div.

97

S  
A  
B

own But lives in it-self a - lone.

own But lives in it-self a - lone,

But lives in it-self a - lone,

(LH under) (LH over) (LH under)

100

S  
A  
B

lives in it-self a - lone.

lives in it-self a -

(LH over) (LH under) (LH over)

103

S A *mf*

B lone... *mf*

*cresc.* *mf*

(LH under) (LH under) (LH over)

106

S A *mp* *p*

B *mp* *p*

*mp* *p*

(LH under) (LH over) (LH over)

109

S A *molto rit.*

B *molto rit.*

*pp*

(LH over)

# The Three Mysteries

Poem -  
Edwin Muir

3) *If I Could Know*  
for SAB voices and piano

Music -  
Ken Johnston

Simple and unhurried ♩ = 60

SA unis. *p*

Make me to see and hear\_

*p*

Simple and unhurried ♩ = 60

*p*

*Ped.* \_\_\_\_\_ | (*sim.*)

6

SA div.

— that I\_ may know This jour- ney\_ and the place to- wards which I go;

10

and have their sign\_

For a be- gin- ning and an end are mine Sure - ly, \_\_\_\_\_ and have their sign, \_

For a be- gin- ning and an end are mine \_\_\_\_\_

14 — Which I and all in the earth and the hea- vens show. SA unis. *p* 3

and all in the earth and the hea- vens show. Teach me to

Sure- ly, and all in the earth and the hea- vens show. Teach me to

*cresc.* *dim.*

18 rit. *pp* 3 A tempo

know, Teach me to know.

know, Teach me to know.

*p* rit. A tempo *pp*

*ped.* *ped.* *ped.*

23 A little faster than the opening ♩ = 66 (SA unis.) *p*

If I could tru- ly know that I do know This, and the

A little faster than the opening ♩ = 66 *p*

*ped.* (sim.)

27 SA div.

S  
A

fore - shower of this show, Who is my - self, for plot and scene are mine, -

31

S  
A

—They say, and the world my sign, Man, earth and heaven, — co - pat - terned so or  
 Man, earth and heaven, —

*cresc.*  
*cresc.*

35

S  
A

so, If I could know, If I could know, If I could know. —  
 co - pat - terned so or so, *mp* If I could know, If I could know, If I could

*mp*

*Red.* *Red.*

39

S  
A

know. ah and

*p* *mp*

B

If I could swear that I do tru - ly see The real world, and

*p* *mp*

*Red.*

43

S  
A

all it - self\_ and free, \_\_\_\_\_ ah \_\_\_\_\_ Nor

B

all it - self\_ and free, Not pri - soned in\_ my shal - low sight's con - fine, Nor

47

S  
A

mine, but to be mine, Free - ly\_ some - time\_ to come\_ and be with

B

mine, but to be mine, Free - ly\_ some - time\_

51

S  
A

me, If I\_ could see, If I\_ could see, If I\_ could see. \_\_\_\_\_

B

to come and be with me, If I\_ could see, If I\_ could see, If I\_ could

**poco rit.** **Tempo primo** ♩ = 60

55

S A see. *p* If I could tell that I do tru - ly hear A mu - sic, —

B see. *p* If I could tell that I do tru - ly hear A mu - sic, —

**poco rit.** **Tempo primo** ♩ = 60

*p* If I could tell that I do tru - ly hear A mu - sic, —

Ped. (sim.)

59

S A *cresc.* not this tu - mult in my ear, ah con - fused or fine; *mp* Of all that cries in the world, —

B *cresc.* not this tu - mult in my ear, ah con - fused or fine; If

63

S A *f* If there were staff and sign Pitched high a - bove the bat - tle of hope and fear, —

B *f* there were staff and sign Pitched high a - bove the bat - tle of hope and fear, of

Ped. Ped. Ped. (sim.)

67 *mp* If I could hear. \_\_\_\_\_  
S A *mp* If I could hear. \_\_\_\_\_  
B hope and fear, \_\_\_\_\_ *mp* If I could hear. \_\_\_\_\_

**A little faster** ♩ = 66

72 *p* SA unis.  
S Make me to see and hear \_\_\_\_\_ that I \_\_\_\_\_ may know This jour-ney \_\_\_\_\_ and the place to-wards which I  
B *p*

**A little faster** ♩ = 66

76 SA div.  
S go; \_\_\_\_\_ For a be-gin-ning and an end are mine Sure-ly, \_\_\_\_\_ ↗  
B \_\_\_\_\_ For a be-gin-ning and an end are

80 and have their sign \_\_\_\_\_ Which I and all in the earth and the hea - vens

S  
A

and have their sign, \_\_\_\_\_ and all <sup>3</sup> in the earth and the hea - vens

B

mine \_\_\_\_\_ Sure - ly, \_\_\_\_\_ and all in the earth and the

*cresc.*

83 show. \_\_\_\_\_ Teach me to know, \_\_\_\_\_

S  
A

show. \_\_\_\_\_ Teach me to know, \_\_\_\_\_

B

hea - vens show. \_\_\_\_\_ Teach me to

*dim.* *p*

87 *rit.* SA unis. *pp* <sup>3</sup> Teach me to know. \_\_\_\_\_

S  
A

know, Teach me to know. \_\_\_\_\_

B

*rit.* *A little slower* *pp* *rit.*