

Choral Score

Music in the Air

*text by Mary Church Terrell (1863–1954)
for chorus (SSATB) and orchestra*

Jake Berran

(2024)



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Choral Score (with piano reduction)

INSTRUMENTATION

Soprano 1
Soprano 2
Alto
Tenor
Bass
Piano

PROGRAM NOTES

Mary Church Terrell (1863–1954) is known best for her lifelong civil rights activism, including her role in founding the National Association of Colored Women in 1896. She was also one of the first Black women to earn a bachelor's degree, both in the U.S. as a whole and at Oberlin College, where she majored in classics and was nominated as class poet her freshman year (in her junior year, she lost this election to a man who she later wrote "had never written a poem in his life...and had never exhibited any talent in that direction"). During this period of her life, Terrell wrote *Music in the air*, a metrical poem that may have also been song lyrics (one line contains a note to "repeat soft"). In three stanzas, the poem simultaneously traces the arc from morning to night and that from birth to death, calling attention to the mystical, "musical" beauty of human life and nature. To capture this sense of awe, I used chord progressions without a clear major or minor quality and found much of the harmony on a spectrum of suspensions from sparse to dense. A particular challenge in this piece was to represent the refrain "music in the air" in ways beyond the fact that it's a true statement when sung by the choir. For instance, at the beginning, layers of "music" are slowly peeled back to reveal the melody (in the "air") to be sung. *Music in the Air* was composed for the Lorain County Bicentennial celebration on May 24, 2024.

Duration: ca. 7 minutes. If mm. 61–93 are cut, the piece is 5 minutes. In this case, the soprano notes in mm. 94–95 should be deleted.

TEXT

Music in the Air
Mary Church Terrell

1. There's music in the air.
When the infant's morn is nigh
And faint its blush is seen,
On the bright and laughing sky.
Many a harps extatic sound,
With its thrill of joy profound,
While we list enchanted there,
(To the music in the air.) (repeat soft)
2. There's music in the air
When the noontide's sultry beam
Reflects a golden light,
On the distant mountain stream.
When beneath some grateful shade,
Sorrow's aching head is laid
Sweetly to the spirit there
Comes the music in the air.
3. There's music in the air
When the twilight's gentle sigh,
Is lost on evening's breast,
As its pensive beauties die.
Then O Then, the loved ones gone,
Wake the pure celestial song,
Angel voices greet us there
In the music in the air.

Source: Library of Congress

PERFORMANCE NOTES

- In m. 49 and m. 55, the "t" of list should be pronounced. (The word listen clarifies the meaning and is not found in the source text.)
- The direction to "vib(rato) wider" (first in mm. 57–59) should only be followed to a healthy extent.
- "Vib. norm." cancels this direction.
- Starting at rehearsal L, the pronunciation of the vowel in "the" is specified in parentheses.

for the Lorain County Bicentennial

Music in the Air

for chorus and orchestra

Mary Church Terrell (1863-1954)
(written ca. 1880-1884)

Jake Berran (b. 2002)
(composed 2024)

Piano Red.

$\text{♩} = 54$

p

ped. ad lib.

A

6

p **A**

There's mu - sic,

A

S1

12

p

air

S2

p

air

A

mf *pp*

mu - sic, there's mu - sic in the air

tr

pp

8va

p

2 18 *p* **B**

S1
When the in - fant, the in - fant's morn is nigh, the in - fant's morn is

S2
When the in - fant, the in - fant's morn is nigh, the in - fant's morn is

A
When the in - fant, the in - fant's morn is nigh, the in - fant's morn is

(8) *p* **B** *8va*

23 *mf* *pp*

S1
nigh and faint, faint its blush is seen

S2
nigh and faint, faint its blush is seen

A
nigh and faint, faint its blush is seen

mp *mf* *pp*

28 **C** *p* *mp*

A
on the bright *mp* on the

T
on the bright on the bright

C *fp*

S1 *mf* on the

S2 *mf* on the

A bright and laugh - ing bright and bright *mf* and

T *mf* on the bright on the bright on the bright

B on the bright on the bright and laugh - ing



S1 bright and laugh - ing laugh - ing sky

S2 bright and laugh - ing laugh - ing sky

A laugh - ing laugh - ing bright and laugh - ing sky

T bright laugh - ing bright laugh - ing laugh - ing sky bright and laugh - ing sky

B on the bright on the bright bright and laugh - ing sky

mp *mf*

4 36 **accel.** D ♩ = 66

f

S1 Ma - ny a harps' ex - ta - tic sound with the thrill

S2 Ma - ny a harps' ex - ta - tic sound with the thrill

A Ma - ny a harps' ex - ta - tic sound with the thrill

T Ma - ny a harps' ex - ta - tic sound with the

B Ma - ny a harps' ex - ta - tic sound with the

accel. D ♩ = 66

f

40 (♩ = 100)

S1 the thrill of joy pro - found, pro -

S2 the thrill of the thrill of joy pro - found,

A the thrill of the thrill of joy pro - found,

T thrill, thrill of joy pro - found,

B thrill, thrill of joy pro - found,

(♩ = 100)

S1 - found, pro - found as we list (t)

S2 pro - found, pro - found as we list (t)

A pro - found, pro - found as we list (t)

T pro - found, pro - found as we list (t)

B pro - found as we list (t)

(♩. = 66)

E



S1 list - en list (t) en - chan - ted, en -

S2 list - en list (t) en - chan - ted, en -

A list - en list (t) en - chan - ted, en -

T list - en list (t) en - chan - ted, en -

B list - en list (t) en - chan - ted, en -

rit. ♩. = 80

F

6 57 *vib. wider* *pp* *rit.*..... *vib. norm.*

S1 - chan - - ted, en - chan - - - ted there

S2 *vib. wider* *pp* *vib. norm.*
- chan - - ted, en - chan - - - ted there

A *vib. wider* *pp* *vib. norm.*
- chan - - ted, en - chan - - - ted there

T *vib. wider* *pp* *vib. norm.*
- chan - - ted, en - chan - - - ted there

B *vib. wider* *pp* *vib. norm.*
- chan - - ted, en - chan - - - ted there

61 ♩ = 60

S1 *p*
to the mu - sic in the air

S2 *p*
Ooh

A

T

B

..... ♩ = 60

pp sempre 7 7 7 7 *p* *pp*

G ♩ = 66

65

S1 *mf* *fp*
There's mu - sic in the air

S2 *mf* *fp*
There's mu - sic in the air

A *mf* *fp*
There's mu - sic in the air

T *mf*
when the

B *mf*
when the

G ♩ = 66

f *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p*

f *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p*

S1 *mp* *mf*
 when the noon - tide's sul - try, sul - try beam

S2 *mp*
 when the noon - - - tide - - -

A *mp*
 when the noon - - - tide - - -

T
 noon - tide, when the noon, the noon - tide's sul - try, sul - try beam

B
 noon - tide, when the noon, the noon - tide's sul - try, sul - try beam

(alt. hands)
f *p* *mf* *p* *f* *mf* *p* *f*
tr *tr*

PREPER

S1 re - flects, re - flects, re - flects a gol - den

S2 - beam re - flects, re - flects, re - flects a gol - den

A - beam re - flects, re - flects, re - flects a gol - den

T re - flects, re - flects, re - - -

B re - flects, re - flects, re - - -

p *mf* *p* *mf* *mf* *mp* *mp*

3 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

PREVIEW

S1 light on the dis - tant moun - tain stream. *p* *f*

S2 light on the dis - tant moun - tain stream. *p* *f* *mf* *mp* When be - neath, be -

A light on the dis - tant moun - tain stream. *p* *f* *mf* *mp* When be - neath, be -

T - flects a light on the dis - tant moun - tain stream. *p* *f* *mf* *mp* When be - neath, be -

B - flects a light on the dis - tant moun - tain stream. *p* *f* *mf* *mp* When be - neath, be -

f *mf* *mp*

81 *p* *mp > p* *mp*

S2 -neath, be - neath, when be - neath some grate - ful shade, sor - row's, sor - row's ach - ing,

A *p* *mp > p* *mp*

-neath, be - neath, when be - neath some grate - ful shade, sor - row's, sor - row's ach - ing,

T *p* *mp > p* *mp*

-neath, be - neath, when be - neath some grate - ful shade, sor - row's, sor - row's ach - ing,

B *p* *mp > p* *mp*

-neath, be - neath, when be - neath some grate - ful shade, sor - row's, sor - row's ach - ing,

p *mp > p* *mp*

85 *mf* *p*

S2 ach - ing head is laid

A *mf* *p* laid sweet - ly, _____ *pp*

T *mf* *p* laid sweet - ly, _____ *pp*

B *mf* *p* laid sweet - ly, _____ *pp*

mf *p* *pp*

89 *pp* *ppp*

S1 sweet - ly _____ lays the spi - rit there, *ppp*

S2 *pp* sweet - ly _____ lays the spi - rit there, *ppp*

A _____ sweet - ly _____ spi - rit there, *ppp*

T _____ sweet - ly _____ spi - rit there, *ppp*

B _____ sweet - ly _____ spi - rit there, *ppp*

ppp

12 93

S1 *p* ← ♩ = ♩ →
 there comes the mu - sic in the air

S2 *p*
 there comes the mu - sic in the air

A *p*
 there comes the mu - sic

T *p*
 there comes the mu - sic

B *p*
 there comes the mu - sic

pp



T 98 *p*
 There's

B *p*
 There's

mf *mp* *p*

I

T
mu - sic in the air when the twi - light, the twi - light's gen - tle sigh is lost,

B
mu - sic in the air when the twi - light, the twi - light's gen - tle sigh is lost,

I *pp* *8va*
3

110

T
lost on eve - ning's breast as its pen - sive, pen - sive beau - ties die.

B
lost on eve - ning's breast as its pen - sive, pen - sive beau - ties die.

pp
pp

pp *8va*
3

S1 *p* Then O Then the

S2 *p* Then O Then the

A *p* vib. wider Then, Then O Then the
vib. norm.

T *p* Then, Then, Then O Then the
vib. wider vib. norm.

B *p* Then, Then, Then O Then the
vib. wider vib. norm.

J ♩ = 72

S1 loved ones

S2 loved ones gone *< mf*

A loved ones gone *< mf*

T loved ones gone *< mf*

B loved ones

A *mf* wake,

T *p < mf* wake, wake,

B *p < mf* wake, wake,

16 128 *p* *mf* *f*

S1
wake the pure ce - - les - tial song.

S2
wake the pure ce - - les - tial song.

A
wake the pure ce - - les - tial song.

T
wake the pure ce - - les - tial song.

B
wake the pure ce - - les - tial song.

mf *f*

133 *ff*

K

S1 An - gel voi - - ces, an - gel - - voi - ces greet us there, *f*

S2 *ff* An - gel voi - ces, an - gel voi - ces greet us, greet us, *f*

A *ff* An - gel voi - ces, an - gel voi - ces greet us *f*

T *ff* An - gel voi - ces, voi - ces greet

B *ff* An - gel voi - - ces greet, *f*

K

mf

mp

rit. ♩ = 66

S1 *mf* *mp* *p*
 voi - ces greet, greet, greet us there.

S2 *mf* *mp* *p*
 voi - ces greet, greet, greet us there.

A *mf* *mp* *p*
 there, voi - ces greet, greet, greet us there.

T *f* *mf* *mp* *p*
 voi - - ces greet, greet, greet us.

B *mf* *mp* *p*
 voi - - ces greet, greet, greet us.

rit. ♩ = 66
mp *p*

L *p*

S1 *p*
 Mu - sic in the(e) Mu - sic in the(e)

S2 *p*
 Mu - sic in the(e) Mu - sic in the(e)

A *p*
 Mu - sic in the(e) Mu - sic in the(e)

T *p*
 In the mu - sic, in the(uh) Mu - sic in the(e)

B *p*
 In the mu - sic, in the(uh) Mu - sic in the(e)

L *p*

M

p *mf* *p*

S1 the(e) In the air.

S2 the(e) In the air.

A the(e) In the air.

T in In the air.

B in In the air.

p *mf* *p*

p *mf* *p*

gva (orch. would sustain F4 here)

M

p *mf* *p*

S1 *f* *pp* air

S2 *f* *pp* air

A *f*

T *f*

B *f*

f p *3* *3*