

SBMP 1663
THE GIFT TO SING, Emery

SATB
piano

Jamil Hillman
CHORAL SERIES

The Gift to Sing

TEXT BY
James Weldon Johnson

MUSIC BY
Matthew Emery

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About the composer

Dr. Matthew Emery is a Canadian composer who “writes with an honesty which enchants” (Vancouver Sun). His music has been performed in twenty-six countries, and recent performance venues include the Great Wall of China, the White House and the Musikverein. Matthew has received over forty commissions and his music has been performed by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, Vancouver Chamber Choir, Elmer Iseler Singers, National Youth Orchestra of Canada, National Youth Choir of Canada, European Union Youth Orchestra, Orchestra London, the Art of Time Ensemble, Rolston String Quartet, Dennis Wick Canadian Wind Orchestra, Erin Wall, Susan Platts, Rena Sharon, Simone Osborne, Leslie Fagan, Tracy Dahl, and the Bach Music Festival of Canada Orchestra.

Dr. Emery studied at the University of British Columbia (B.Mus) and the University of Toronto (M.Mus, DMA). Matthew has received over thirty awards and prizes for his compositions and his work has been included on nineteen albums, including a Juno nominated disc. View more music by Dr. Matthew Emery on his website: <https://composermatthewemery.com>

Composer notes

“The Gift to Sing” speaks to the power and universality that the act of singing together brings. It speaks to overcoming grief, strife and adversity through song. Everyone has a song which swells in their heart, and this work illuminates that joy. The work utilizes a somewhat varied strophic form, though phrases are slightly varied and developed. Various textures are created in the composition so that each section presents the main theme, and various voices add counterpoint which allow the work to blossom. Thank you to Dr. Jamie Hillman and the 2022 Utah All-State Junior High Honor Choir for bringing “The Gift to Sing” to life.

About the poet

James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938) distinguished himself as both a man of letters and a civil rights leader in the early part of the 20th century. He was well known during the Harlem Renaissance for his poems, novel, and collections of poems and spirituals celebrating Black culture. In 1934, he was the first Black American to be hired as a professor at New York University. Among his many accomplishments is the writing of the lyrics of “Lift Every Voice and Sing”, which has become known as the Black national anthem.

Text

Sometimes the mist overhangs my path,
And blackening clouds about me cling;
But, oh, I have a magic way
To turn the gloom to cheerful day—
I softly sing.

And if the way grows darker still,
Shadowed by Sorrow’s somber wing,
With glad defiance in my throat,
I pierce the darkness with a note,
And sing, and sing.

I brood not over the broken past,
Nor dread whatever time may bring;
No nights are dark, no days are long,
While in my heart there swells a song,
And I can sing.

James Weldon Johnson
In public domain worldwide

Performance time

c. 3’25

recording and rehearsal tracks available at
www.sbmp.com

The Gift to Sing

James Weldon Johnson
(1871-1938)

Matthew Emery

Gently ♩ = 90-100
mp

S
Some - times the mist o - ver - hangs my path, And

A
Some - times the mist o - ver - hangs my path, And

T
Some - times the mist o - ver - hangs my path, And

B
Some - times the mist o - ver - hangs my path, And

Piano
Gently ♩ = 90-100
mp warm
with pedal

4
black' - ning clouds a - bout me cling; But, oh,

black' - ning clouds a - bout me cling; But, oh,

black' - ning clouds a - bout me cling; But, oh,

black' - ning clouds a - bout me cling; But, oh,

8

mf *f* *mp*

I have a mag-ic way To turn the gloom to cheer-ful

mf *f* *mp*

I have a mag-ic way To turn the gloom to cheer-ful

mf *f* *mp*

I have a mag-ic way To turn the gloom to cheer-ful

mf *f* *mp*

I have a mag-ic way To turn the gloom to cheer-ful

12

mf *mp* *dolce*

day- I soft - ly sing, I

mf *mp* *dolce*

day- I soft - ly sing, I

mf *mp* *dolce*

day- I soft - ly sing, I

mf *mp* *dolce*

day- I soft - ly sing, I

17

p *mf*

sing, I sing,

sing, I sing,

sing, I sing,

sing, I sing,

21

rit. *mp* *mf* *A tempo* *mp* *3*

I sing. If the way grows dark-er

mf *mp* *3*

I sing. If the way grows dark-er

mf *pp*

I sing. Mmm

mf *pp*

I sing. Mmm

rit. *A tempo* *mp* *3*

25

still, Shad-owed by Sor-row's som-ber wing, With

still, Shad-owed by Sor-row's som-ber wing, With

Mmm

Mmm

30

glad de - fi - ance in my throat, I

glad de - fi - ance in my throat, I

mf *f*

mf *f*

mf *f*

34

pierce the dark-ness with a note, And sing,

mf *mp* *dolce*

pp *mp* *dolce*

Mmm And sing,

pp *mp* *dolce*

Mmm And sing,

mp *mp*

38

and sing, and

mf *mf*

and sing, and

mf *mf*

and sing, and

mf *mf*

and sing, and

mf *mf*

42

I sing, and sing, sing, and sing, sing, and sing, sing, and sing.

46

mf rit. *pp* A tempo ♩ = 90-100

Mmm Mmm

mf *pp*

mf *mp* 3

I brood not o - ver the

mf *mp* 3

I brood not o - ver the

rit. A tempo ♩ = 90-100

mp

51

Mmm

Mmm

bro - ken past, Nor dread what-ev - er time may bring;

bro - ken past, Nor dread what-ev - er time may bring;

55

mp

While

mp

While

mf *f*

No nights are dark, no days are long, While

mf *f* *mp*

No nights are dark, no days are long, While

mf *f*

60

rit. *mf* *mp*

in my heart there swells a song, And

mf *mp*

in my heart there swells a song, And

mf *mp*

in my heart there swells a song, And

mf *mp*

in my heart there swells a song, And

rit. *mf*

mp *mf*

63

A tempo ♩ = 90-100

dolce

sing, and

dolce

sing, and

dolce

sing, and

dolce

sing, and

A tempo ♩ = 90-100

mp

[illegible][illegible]

72

mf *rit.* *mp*

And I *mf* *mp*

And I *mf* *mp*

8 sing, And I *mf* *mp*

sing, And I

mf *mp*

76

p *mp*

can sing. I sing. *mp*

p *mp*

can sing. I sing. *mp*

p *mp*

8 can sing. I sing. *mp*

p *mp*

can sing. I sing. *mp*

pp *mp*