

How Sweet I Roamed (2004)

SATB a/c

Difficulty rating: 3

Duration: 2'45"

Premiere: C4, conducted by Joy Chia, NYC, 02/23/08

This work was presented at the Western Wind Workshops in Northampton, MA, in August of 2007; C4 gave it its first public performance the following February.

I've emphasized the tinge of nostalgia in this pastoral text by the 14-year-old William Blake by, among other things, repeating its title line at the end. There is little here of the mysticism of later Blake, and this little part-song doesn't take things too, too seriously. I've allowed myself a bit more leeway with text painting than I might normally, and there's nothing that dark even in its most melancholy moments.

How sweet I roam'd from field to field,
And tasted all the summer's pride
'Til I the prince of love beheld
Who in the sunny beams did glide!

He shew'd me lilies for my hair
And blushing roses for my brow;
He led me through his garden fair,
Where all his golden pleasures grow.

With sweet May dews my wings were wet,
And Phoebus fir'd my vocal rage
He caught me in his silken net,
And shut me in his golden cage.

He loves to sit and hear me sing,
Then, laughing, sports and plays with me;
Then stretches out my golden wing,
And mocks my loss of liberty.

--William Blake