Commissioned by Louisiana State University for the Tiger Glee Club—Trey Davis, Music Director

Premiered on October 3, 2016 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana—Greg Gallagher, Tenor Soloist

Program Notes

JOHN MUIR and MRS. CARR

When John Muir was a student at the University of Wisconsin, he was a frequent caller at the house of Dr. Ezra S. Carr. The kindness shown him there, and especially the sympathy which Mrs. Carr, as a botanist and a lover of nature, felt in the young man's interests and aims, led to the formation of a lasting friendship. He regarded Mrs. Carr, indeed, as his "spiritual mother," and his letters to her in later years are the outpourings of a sensitive spirit to one whom he felt thoroughly understood and sympathized with him. These letters are therefore peculiarly revealing of their writer's personality. Most of them were written from the Yosemite Valley, and they give a good notion of the life Muir led there, sheepherding, guiding, and tending a sawmill at intervals to earn his daily bread, but devoting his real self to an ardent scientific study of glacial geology and a joyous and reverent communion with Nature.

ABOUT the SONGS

The five letters which provide the lyrics for the songs (adapted by the composer) were selected for their range of topics and sentiments. Some portray the wildlife in the mountains ("Glacier Birds..."). Others extol the beauty of the Sierra ("Mountain Glory," "Yosemite Falls"). One expresses the whimsical/temperamental personality of the author ("Ice!"). And the final letter ("Sequoia") speaks reverently of the great trees, in a language both naturalistic and sacred. They are the "greatest light in the woods, the greatest light in the world."

The musical settings, especially in the piano accompaniment, are quite programmatic. Glacier birds scamper up and down the keyboard in tone clusters. "Icy" glissandi float off. The great trees take root in large, block chords, and waterfalls cascade down in scales.

There is personality in the letters. The bond between John Muir and Mrs. Carr (whom he addresses formally) is one of great kinship—a blending of the souls, a "spiritual romance." As he marvels at the beauty of the wilderness, he writes ardently, "I wish that you could see this . . ." When he learns that Mrs. Carr, the botanist (whose plants suffer from the frost), dislikes ice, he chides her, and creates a "mock argument" over the value of glacial ice.

The songs begin with an ascent into the mountains. They close with the return to the coast, to the magnificent Sequoia trees, where John Muir camps for the night in the company of a squirrel. Charmingly, he writes "Therefore, my Carr, goodnight."

5. DESCENT: "SEQUOIA"

[SQUIRRELVILLE, SEQUOIA COUNTY NUT TIME]

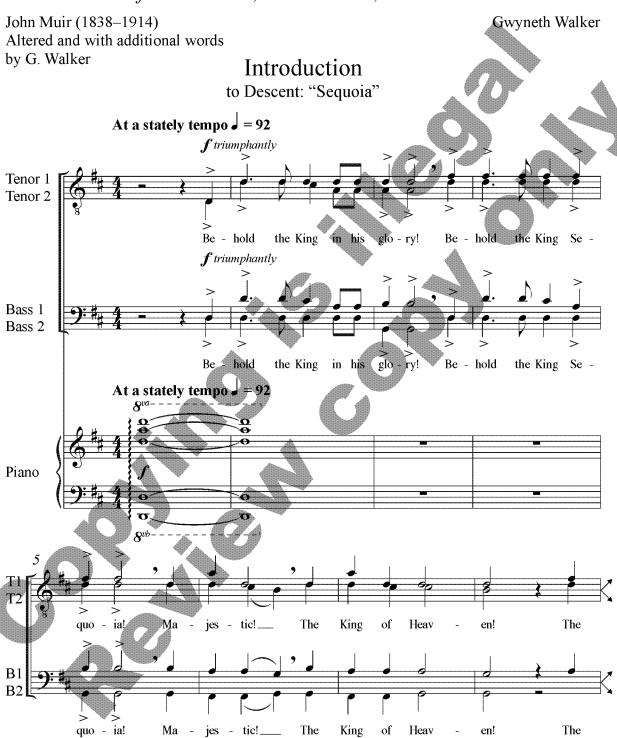
Behold the King in his glory, King Sequoia! Behold! Behold! Some time ago I left for Sequoia, and have been at his feet; fasting and praying for light. For is he not the greatest light in the woods? And is he not the greatest light in the world? Where are such columns of sunshine brought to earth?

See Sequora reaching for the skies, every summit modeled in curves, as if pressed into unseen moulds, warm in the amber sun. How truly Godful in stature! Today, King Sequoia bowed down to me down in the grove as I stood gazing. Behold the King in his glory, King Sequoia!

The sun is set and the star candles are lit to show me the way—little Douglas squirrel and I off to bed. Therefore, my Carr, goodnight. You ask, "When are you coming down?" Ask the Lord—Lord Sequoia! Behold!

Descent: "Sequoia"

for Tenor Solo, TTBB Chorus, and Piano



Touching the Infinite Sky, Catalog No. 8516





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Descent: "Sequoia" [Squirrelville, Sequoia County Nut Time]



















(Lev.)_



Ted.

Ted.

^{*}a reference to the Douglas fir, the home of the squirrel!





