PROGRAM NOTES

I first encountered the text of this piece in a Christmas card made by the Holy Myrrbearers Monastery, where it was mistakenly attributed to Gregory of Nyssa (an attribution repeated throughout the world wide web, presumably by other recipients of their beautiful card). From my first reading, I was struck by the beauty and power of the text and wondered how I might set it to music. I had other projects to complete, however, and I set it aside for several years. It was not until the summer of 2009 that, exhausted by more than two years' labour on my setting of the Seven Last Words from the Cross (which I had finished just in time for its performance by Camerata that April), I found myself wanting to write short pieces on more cheerful subjects. This text sprang immediately to mind.

Stylistically, this piece is quite different from anything I had written before it, and from anything I am likely to write again, but I hope it offers at least a faint echo of the deep beauty of Gregory of Nazianzus' text.

—Tawnie Olson

TEXT

O Inexpressible mystery and unheard-of paradox! The invisible is seen; the intangible is touched; the Eternal Word becomes accessible to our speech; the timeless steps into time; the Son of God becomes the Son of Man.

—St. Gregory Nazianzen (c. 329–390) (translator unknown) Christmas Oration

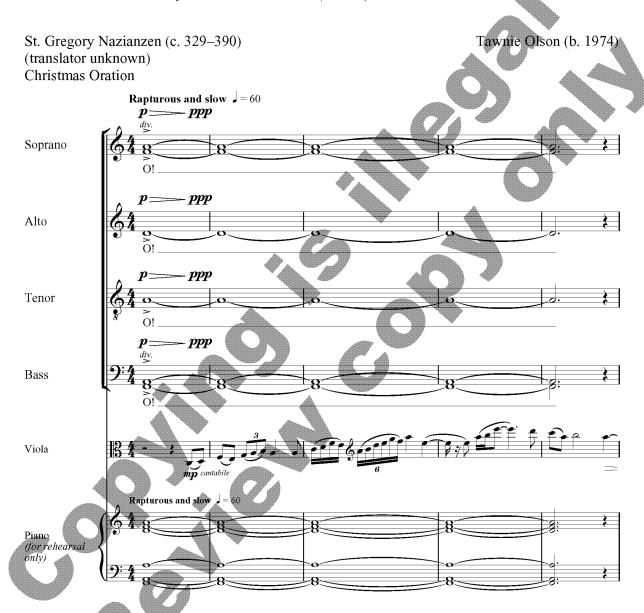
Tawnie Olson

For biographical information visit: www.tawnieolson.com

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O Inexpressible Mystery

for SATB Chorus (divisi)* and Viola



^{*} The tenors do not divide.







O Inexpressible Mystery



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