

The SATB version of **Harlem Songs** was commissioned by the Chesapeake Chorale
Paul Rardin, Artistic Director
and premiered on May 12, 2001
in Bowie, Maryland

Program Notes

Harlem Songs are three musical settings of the poetry of Langston Hughes (1902–1967), an African American poet who lived most of his life in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City. His poetry was inspired by the culture of Harlem: spirituals and blues, urban streets and rooftops, faith and endurance. The language is direct, uncluttered, colorful and highly American.

Harlem Night Song is infused with the language of blues: mixed major and minor tonalities, a gentle tempo, humming. The music is nocturnal, atmospheric. The chorus sings “I love you”, as if calling back and forth across the Harlem rooftops. A change of pace follows in the middle of the piece: “Down the street, a band is playing...” Scat singing, percussive vocal effects and random patterns of “I love you” bring this work to a close.”

—Gwyneth Walker

Text

Come,
Let us roam the night together
Singing.

I love you.

Across
The Harlem roof-tops
Moon is shining.
Night sky is blue.
Stars are great drops
Of golden dew.

Down the street
A band is playing.

I love you.

Come,
Let us roam the night together
Singing.

— The poem “Harlem Night Song”
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Harlem Songs

SATB Chorus and Piano		SSAA Chorus and Piano		TTBB Chorus and Piano	
1. Spirituals	5769	1. Spirituals	6813	1. Spirituals	7294
2. Harlem Night Song	5770	2. Harlem Night Song	6814	➔ 2. Harlem Night Song	7295
3. Tambourines	5771	3. Tambourines	6815	3. Tambourines	7296

Harlem Night Song

for TTBB Chorus and Piano

Langston Hughes (1902–1967)

from Harlem Songs

Gwyneth Walker

Slowly, gently, nocturnal $\text{♩} = 60$

Piano *p*

T1 (non-pitched vocal sounds) *p* *pp*

T2 *p* as in the distance *unis.* *Sss*

B1 *Mmm*

B2 *Mmm*

17 *p* *pp* *Sss* *Mmm* *Mmm*

Ped. *Ped.* *simile*

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25 **B**

Musical score for measures 25-32. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts with a rest and then features a melodic phrase with dynamics *p* and *pp*. The piano accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note bass line and a more active treble line. Performance markings include *Sss* and *Mmm*.

B

Piano accompaniment for measures 25-32. The bass line features a consistent eighth-note pattern with occasional flats. The treble line has a more complex melodic structure with various intervals and dynamics.

33

Musical score for measures 33-40. Similar to the first system, it features a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has dynamics *p* and *pp*. Performance markings include *Sss* and *Mmm*.

41

Musical score for measures 41-48. This system shows the continuation of the piano accompaniment with a steady eighth-note bass line and a melodic treble line.

49 **C** (♩. = 60) *p*

T1
Come, let us roam the night to - geth - - er...

T2

B1 *p*
Come, let us roam the night to - geth - - er...

B2

C (♩. = 60) *p*

Ped. Ped. Ped.

57 *p playfully*
I love you.

p ...Sing - - ing, *p playfully* I love you.

p playfully
I love you.

p ...Sing - - ing, *p playfully* I love you.

p *p playfully*

Ped.

65 *mf passionately* *p*

I love you. A -

mf passionately

I love you. A -

mf passionately *p*

I love you. A -

mf passionately

I love you.

mf

Red. Red. Red.

73 **D**

cross the Har - lem roof - tops Moon is shin - ing.

cross the Har - lem roof - tops Moon is shin - ing.

D

p

Red. Red.

81

E

mf

Stars are great

p

mf

Night sky is blue.

mf

Stars are great

p

mf

Night sky is blue.

E

mf

ped.

ped.

ped.

ped.

89

p

p sustained

drops of gold - en dew. I love

mf

p

gold - en dew.

p

p sustained

drops of gold - en dew. I love

mf

p

gold - en dew.

p

(Ped.)

ped.

ped.

ped.

97

you, I love you, I love you, I love you.

p sustained
I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you.

you, I love you, I love you, I love you.

p sustained
I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you.

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

105 **F**

p

Ah

p

Ah

p

Ah

p

Ah

F *mf*

p

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

113

rit.

p

Musical score for measures 113-120. It features four vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, Tenor 1, Bass 1) and a piano accompaniment. The vocal parts have lyrics "Ah" and are marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a ritardando (*rit.*) marking. The piano accompaniment includes a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and a piano (*p*) dynamic. Pedal points are indicated at the bottom of the piano part.

121

G Swing rhythm ♩ = 160

Musical score for measures 121-124. It features two vocal staves: Tenor 2 (T2) and Bass 2 (B2). The Tenor 2 part has lyrics "Down the" and is marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic and *unis.* (unison). The Bass 2 part has lyrics "Down the" and is also marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic and *unis.* (unison).

Finger Snaps - All Singers

Part for Finger Snaps (Fs.) in 4/4 time, showing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with 'x' marks indicating the snap points.

G Swing rhythm ♩ = 160

Piano accompaniment for measures 121-124. The right hand features a melody with triplets, and the left hand features a walking bass line with triplets. The dynamic is marked as forte (*f*).

(with piano)
swing eighths **f**

125

ya ba

street a band is play - ing,

ya ba

street a band is play - ing,

129

da ba da da da ba da ba da da ba da play - ing. Down the

play - ing. (**f**)

da ba da da da ba da ba da da ba da play - ing. Down the

play - ing. (**f**)

133 **H**

f playfully

street, street, street — a band is play - ing. I love you,
mf *swing eighths*
ya ba da ba ya ba da — ba ya ba da ba ba da ba ya ba da ba
f playfully

street, street, street — a band is play - ing. I love you,
mf *swing eighths*
ya ba da ba ya ba da — ba ya ba da ba ba da ba ya ba da ba

H

137

I love you, I love you, I love you. *f playfully*
I love you, I love you, I love you,
I love you, I love you, I love you. *f playfully*
I love you, I love you, I love you,

140

$\text{♩} = 80$

f cantabile

Come, let us roam the night to - geth - er, —
 I love you. Come, let us roam the night to - geth - er, —
 Come, let us roam the night to - geth - er, —
 I love you. Come, let us roam the night to - geth - er, —

Stop Fingersnaps

$\text{♩} = 80$

f

Red. *rit.* *a tempo* ($\text{♩} = 160$)

144

a tempo ($\text{♩} = 160$)

Sing - ing, — *f* ————— *p*
 sing - ing. — *f* ————— *p*
 Sing - ing, — *f* ————— *p*
 sing - ing. — *f* ————— *p*

rit. *a tempo* ($\text{♩} = 160$)

p *mf*
 (*Red.*) *Red.* *Red.*

(Cymbal-like sounds)

149 **J**

T1
T2

mf >

ch _ ch _ ch _

B1
B2

mf >

ch _ ch _ ch _

J

153

8

ch _ ch _ ch _

ch _ ch _ ch _

f

Ped.

Ped.

157 *poco rit.* **K**

8

poco rit.

p *mf* *p*

Ped.

14

Voices enter separately and at random speeds, as if calling out to each other across the Harlem rooftops.

160 *mf* *die out to only a few voices* *p*

T1 I love you, I love you, *mf*

B1 I love you, I love you, *mf*

(*p*)

(Ped.)

161 *mf* *die out to only a few voices* *p*

T2 I love you, I love you, *mf*

B1 *die out to only a few voices* *p*

B2 *die out to only a few voices* *mf* *p*

I love you, I love you, *mf*

(Ped.)

162 *non ritardando* *swing eighths* *p* *pp*

T1

T2 ch t t ch *pp*

B1 *swing eighths* *p* *pp*

B2 ch t t ch *pp*

non ritardando

(Ped.)

3'15"