

JO-MICHAEL SCHEIBE CHORAL SERIES

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Colorado State University Pueblo
Music Department

Eric Whitacre



Sleep

Charles Anthony Silvestri

for SATB a cappella Chorus

www.waltonmusic.com



About the Work

In the following, composer Eric Whitacre describes the winding ways of a work from idea to publication:

In the winter of 1999 Ms. Julia Armstrong, a lawyer and professional mezzo-soprano living in Austin, Texas, contacted me. She wanted to commission a choral work from me to be premiered by the Austin Pro Chorus (Kinley Lange, conductor), a terrific chorus with whom she regularly performed.

The circumstances around the commission were amazing. She wanted to commission the piece in memory of her parents, who had died within weeks of each other after more than fifty years of marriage; and she wanted me to set her favorite poem, Robert Frost's immortal "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening". I was deeply moved by her spirit and her request, and agreed to take on the commission.

I took my time with the piece, crafting it note by note until I felt that it was exactly the way I wanted it. The poem is perfect, truly a gem, and my general approach was to try to get out of the way of the words and let them work their magic. We premiered the work in Austin, October 2000, and it was well received. Rene Clausen gave "Stopping By Woods" a glorious performance at the ACDA National Convention in the spring of 2001, and soon after I began receiving hundreds of letters, emails, and phone calls from conductors trying to get a hold of the work.

And here was my tragic mistake: I never secured permission to use the poem. Robert Frost's poetry has been under tight control from his estate since his death, and until a few years ago only Randall Thompson ("Frostiana") had been given permission to set his poetry. In 1997, out of the blue, the estate released a number of titles, and at least twenty composers set and published "Stopping By Woods" for chorus. When I looked on line and saw all of these new and different settings, I naturally (and naively) assumed that it was open to anyone. Little did I know that, just months before, the Robert Frost Estate had taken the decision to deny ANY use of the poem, ostensibly because of this plethora of new settings.

After a LONG battle of legalities back and forth, the Estate of Robert Frost and their publisher, Henry Holt Inc., sternly and formally forbade me to use the poem for publication or performance until the poem would become public domain in 2038.

I was crushed. The piece was dead, and would sit under my bed for the next 37 years as a result of rulings by heirs and lawyers. After many discussions with my wife, I decided that I would ask my friend and brilliant poet Charles Anthony Silvestri ("Leonardo Dreams of His Flying Machine", "Lux Aurumque") to set new words to the music I had already written. This was an enormous task, because I was asking him to not only write a poem that had the exact structure of the Frost poem, but that it would even incorporate key words from "Stopping By Woods", like 'sleep'. Tony wrote an absolutely exquisite poem, finding a completely different (but equally beautiful) message in the music I had already written.

And there it is. My setting of Robert Frost's "Stopping By Woods" no longer exists. I am supremely proud of this new work, and my only regret in all of this was that I was way too innocent in my assumption that lawyers and heirs would understand something as simple and delicate as the choral art.



commissioned in loving memory of Mr. M.W. Lacy and Mrs. Caroline Morris Lacy,
by their daughter, Julia Lacy Armstrong

SLEEP

for SATB Chorus *a cappella*

CHARLES ANTHONY SILVESTRI

ERIC WHITACRE

Lento; lontano e molto legato

pp

SOPRANO
The eve - ning hangs be - neath the moon, A

ALTO
The eve - ning hangs be - neath the moon, A

TENOR
The eve - ning hangs be - neath the moon, A

BASS
The eve - ning hangs be - neath the moon, A

5

sil - ver thread on dark - ened dune. With clos - ing eyes and

sil - ver thread on dark - ened dune. With clos - ing eyes and

sil - ver thread on dark - ened dune. With clos - ing eyes and

sil - ver thread on dark - ened dune. With clos - ing eyes and

9

rest - ing head I know that sleep is com - ing soon.

rest - ing head I know that sleep is com - ing soon.

rest - ing head I know that sleep is com - ing soon.

rest - ing head I know that sleep is com - ing soon.

14

Poco più mosso

mf Up - on my pil - low, safe in bed, *mp* A

mf Up - on my pil - low, safe in bed, *mp* A

mf Up - on my pil - low, safe in bed, *mp* A

mf Up - on my pil - low, safe in bed, *mp* A

19

thou - sand pic - tures fill my head, I can - not sleep, my

thou - sand pic - tures fill my head, I can - not sleep, my

thou - sand pic - tures fill my head, I can - not sleep, my

thou - sand pic - tures fill my head, I can - not sleep, my

23

mind's a - flight; And yet my limbs seem made of lead.

mind's a - flight; And yet my limbs seem made of lead.

mind's a - flight; And yet my limbs seem made of lead.

mind's a - flight; And yet my limbs seem made of lead.

27

pp *transparente mp* *mp*

If there are nois - es in the night,

pp *transparente mp* *mp*

If there are nois - es in the night,

pp *transparente mp* *mp*

If there are nois - es in the night,

pp *transparente*

If there are nois - es in

31

mp *mp*

A fright - ening shad - ow, flick - ering light;

mp *mp*

A fright - ening shad - ow, flick - ering light;

mp *mp*

A fright - ening shad - ow, flick - ering light;

the night, in the night,

35

Where

pp Then I sur - ren - - der un - to sleep, Where *mp*

mp Then I sur - ren - der un - to sleep, Where

mp Then I sur - ren - der un - to sleep,

39

clouds of dream give sec - ond sight. _____

clouds of dream give sec - ond sight. _____

clouds of dream give sec - ond sight. _____

clouds of dream give sec - ond sight. _____

43 // *p espressivo*
What dreams may come, both dark and deep, Of
p espressivo
What dreams may come, both dark and deep, Of
p espressivo
What dreams may come, both dark and deep,
p mp
What dreams may come,

47 *f*
fly - ing wings and soar - ing leap As
f
fly - ing wings and soar - ing leap As
dark and deep,
dark and deep,

51

I sur - ren - der un - to sleep, _____ As I sur - ren - der
 I sur - ren - der un - to sleep, _____ As I sur - ren - der
f dark and deep, _____ dark _____ and
f dark and deep, _____ dark _____ and

55

un - to sleep, _____ As I sur - ren - der un - -
 un - to sleep, _____ As I sur - ren - der un - -
 deep, _____ dark _____ un - - -
 deep, _____ dark _____ un - - -

ff 59

to sleep, to sleep, to sleep, to sleep,

This section contains four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of two flats, and a forte (*ff*) dynamic marking. The music consists of a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, some beamed together, and rests. The lyrics 'to sleep,' are written below the notes. The second and third staves continue this melodic pattern. The fourth staff is a bass line, also with eighth and sixteenth notes, and the lyrics 'to sleep,' are written below it. The music concludes with a fermata over the final note.

63

sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep,

This section contains four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of two flats, and a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The music consists of a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, some beamed together, and rests. The lyrics 'sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep,' are written below the notes. The second and third staves continue this melodic pattern. The fourth staff is a bass line, also with eighth and sixteenth notes, and the lyrics 'sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep,' are written below it. The music concludes with a fermata over the final note.

