

When Israel out of Egypt Came

for

Soprano solo and Harpsichord

poem by A. E. Housman

Music by Carl Smith

Composer's Note

This song is a setting of a poem left unpublished at the time of the poet's death in 1936; it is but one of a sizable number left to his brother Laurence (himself a poet) to publish or use as he saw fit. As published in the small collection *More Poems*, it has no title and bears only the Roman numeral "II." While the poet's autograph (found in his notebook) suggests he may have "tinkered" with some additional stanzas before this final one, there's no doubt how he intended the poem to conclude (i.e. his brother got it 'right'). The poem's potent imagery (perhaps chiefly with its many allusions to sand) seems almost certain to liken the voice of the poet to Moses, leading his people to the Promised Land yet remaining unable to enter himself.

In setting the poem, I attempted to convey a sense of moving forward, beginning with an introduction that suggests trudging slowly along, but further through changes in compositional style. The soloist begins by singing on (literally) a reciting tone that has **no** sense of forward movement. Then follows a passage built entirely from melodic *figures* that are essentially early baroque in character (short, barely metrical, "figural" bits of melody) that gradually give way to more linear melodic lines that become more metrical in character. Finally, as the poet leaves behind his opening tone of melancholy doubt and uncertainty and achieves one of remarkable resolve, the music discovers a suitable "big tune," one that's itself linear, melodic, tonal, and emphatically metrical, abandoning its initial faltering doubts and striding confidently forward.

CS

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Poem by A. E. Housman as in *More Poems*

Music by Carl Smith

Pesante

etc.

4

mf When Is-ra-el out of E-gypt

7

came, Safe in the sea they trod; By day in cloud, by ni-ght in

2
10

flame, Went on be-fore them God. He brought them with__

12

- a stretch'd out hand Dry foot-ed through the foam, Past

15

sword and fa - mine, rock and sand, Lust and re - bel - lion,

18 *f e marcato*

home. I ne-ver o - ver Ho-reb heard The blast of ad-vent blow; No

22

fire-faced pro - phet brought me word Which way be-hoved me go.

25 *meno f e cantando*

A - scen-ded is the clou - dy flame, The mount of thun - der

4
28

dumb; The to-kens that to Is-rael came, To me they have not come.

32

tranquillamente

I see the coun-try far a-way Where I shall ne-ver stand;

36

The heart goes where no foot-step may In-to the pro-mis'd land.

etc.

40

The realm I look up - on and die An - oth - er

43

man will own; He shall at - tain the heav'n that I

47

risoluto
Per-ish and have not known. But I will go where they are hid That

51

ne - ver were be - got, To my in - her - i - tance a - mid The

6
55 (almost whispered)

na - tion that is not. Where... Where...

poco a poco più animato

59 *più marcato e f*

Where... Where... Where... Where

63

mix'd with me the sand - storms drift, And nerve and heart and brain Are

ritardando sempre e meno **f**

67

ash-es for the air to lift, And light-ly show-er a - gain. And

71

light - ly show - er a - - gain.

Nashville
19.IX.15

Carl Smith is a faculty member at the Blair School of Music, Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN. In addition to his work as a performer and teacher, he has been active as a composer in several fields, perhaps especially in works for choral ensembles of various sorts and for solo voice. Among his choral works are a masque, several cantatas, secular part-songs, and a number of sacred choral works, principally available from Oxford University Press, Sacred Music Press, MorningStar Music, and Musica Armelin.

A considerable amount of his work as a composer has also been devoted to art-song, both secular and sacred; while there are several larger song-cycles, there are also a good many individual songs. During this time of reduced performing forces resulting from the COVID pandemic, he is making available upon request and *free of charge*, a fair number of solo songs - both secular and sacred, those in cycles as well as individual songs - that are not currently available from publishers.

To make unpublished score requests, contact:
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