

From *Great War Triptych*

Program Notes

Great War Triptych (2019), composed for the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I, is my setting for SATB chorus and string quartet of selected poems written during the war. The first excerpt is a setting of *In Flanders Fields* by John McCrae. The text of *In Flanders Fields* is written from the perspective of the men who fought and died in Flanders Fields and is set for tenors and basses only.

In November 1918 an American, Moina Michael, read *In Flanders Fields* and was so moved that she wrote *We Shall Keep the Faith* and dedicated the rest of her life to raising funds to support US veterans of the war. The second excerpt from *Great War Triptych* is a setting of *We Shall Keep the Faith*, which follows without a break at the end of *In Flanders Fields* and begins with sopranos and altos only, who are then joined by the full chorus.

The third excerpt from *Great War Triptych* is a setting of Sara Teasdale's poem *Spring in War-Time*. Each of the four stanzas of the poem begins with ruminations on the beauties and joys of spring but ends with the clashing juxtaposition of the horrors of war and questions of how spring can exist in the context of war. In my setting, the strings interrupt our quiet ruminations forcing us to face the difficult, burning questions. The movement ends with a brief nod towards the ideas and ideals of German Romanticism with its image of death as a “. . . release from life's complexities and a serene return to nature's peaceful domain” and the “. . . characteristic German Romantic image, that of yearning for death.” (Stein, Deborah, and Robert Spillman. *Poetry into Song: Performance and Analysis of Lieder*. Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 12.)

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