

Where the Light Begins

Perhaps it does not begin.
Perhaps it is always.

Perhaps it takes
a lifetime
to open our eyes,
to learn to see
what has forever
shimmered in front of us—

the luminous line
of the map
in the dark

the vigil flame
in the house
of the heart

the love
so searing
we cannot keep
from singing,
from crying out
in testimony
and praise.

Perhaps this day
will be the mountain
over which
the dawn breaks.

Perhaps we
will turn our face
toward it,
toward what has been
always.

Perhaps
our eyes
will finally open
in ancient recognition,
willingly dazzled,
illuminated at last.

Perhaps this day
the light begins
in us.

-Jan Richardson

About the Work

This beautiful poem was originally written as a blessing for Christmas by writer and artist Jan Richardson. On her blog (adventdoor.com), she writes, "though we cannot see or feel or know all the ways that God is radiantly illuminating us, may we open ourselves toward that light. May we open our eyes, our hands, our hearts to meet it. May we lean into the light that begins in the deepest dark, bearing itself into this world *for us*."

In writing this piece in its original SSA voicing for the Henry Middle School Varsity Treble Choir, their director asked me to contemplate the theme of "peace" for their concert program. This text, while originally written about Advent and the anticipation of Christmas, uses wonderfully universal words that relate to ideas of peace and hope. Jan's blessing makes me think that within each of us is the ability to work toward peace. It doesn't take a monumental action, just many little kindnesses that we can show to others every day which radiate out to bring light to the whole of humanity. When we love, accept, and care for all of our neighbors—despite our differences—we find that the light that the dark world so desperately needs begins in us.

Many thanks to the Raymore-Peculiar High School Chamber Singers (Stephen Rew, conductor) and the Raymore Sunrise Optimist Club for their commissioning of this SATB voicing.

-Susan LaBarr

About the Composer

Susan LaBarr (b. 1981) is a composer and choral editor living and working in Springfield, Missouri. Her compositions are published by Walton Music, Morningstar Music, and Santa Barbara Music Publishing. Susan has completed commissions for choirs worldwide, most notably Seraphic Fire, the National ACDA Women's Choir Consortium, and the Texas Choral Director's Association's Director's Chorus. She served as the Missouri Composer Laureate for 2012 and 2013. Her arrangement of Quem pastores laudavere appeared on New York Polyphony's 2014 Grammy-nominated album, *Sing Thee Nowell*. Her work for mezzo soprano and piano, *Little Black Book*, was premiered at Carnegie Hall in October 2019.

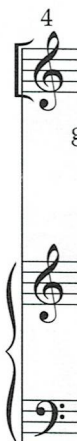
Central to Susan's musical vocabulary is the knowledge she gained from studying with Alice Parker at her home in Hawley, Massachusetts, where she attended the Composer's Workshop and Melody Studies Workshop. Susan attended Missouri State University in Springfield, where she received a Bachelor of Arts in music and a Master of Music in music theory. Susan, her husband Cameron, and their son Elliott reside in Springfield, Missouri, where Cameron is the Director of Choral Studies at Missouri State University and Susan works as Editor of Walton Music.

Duration: Approx. 3:44

Text by
JAN RI

Sopran

Piano



For the Raymore-Peculiar High School Chamber Singer for their performance at
the 2022 Missouri Music Educators Association Conference; Stephen Rew, conductor
Made possible by a generous donation from the Raymore Sunrise Optimist Club

Where the Light Begins

SATB and Piano

Text by
JAN RICHARDSON

Music by
SUSAN LABARR (b. 1981)

With determination (♩. = 54)

Soprano

p

Per-haps it does not ____ be-

Piano

p

Pedal harmonically

4

gin. Per-haps it is al - ways. Per-haps it

7 *mp*

S takes a life-time to op-en our eyes, — to learn to see— the *mp*

A the

Measures 7-9 of the musical score. The Soprano (S) and Alto (A) parts are shown with lyrics. The Soprano part begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The Alto part begins with a treble clef. The Piano accompaniment is shown in the bottom system with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The music is in 4/4 time. The lyrics for the Soprano part are: "takes a life-time to op-en our eyes, — to learn to see— the". The lyrics for the Alto part are: "the". The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a single note in the left hand.

10

lum-in-ous line of the map in the dark, the vi - gil flame in the house of the heart, the

lum-in-ous line of the map in the dark, the vi - gil flame in the house of the heart, the

mp

Measures 10-11 of the musical score. The Soprano (S) and Alto (A) parts are shown with lyrics. The Piano accompaniment is shown in the bottom system with a grand staff. The lyrics for both parts are: "lum-in-ous line of the map in the dark, the vi - gil flame in the house of the heart, the". The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a single note in the left hand.

12

S love so sear - ing we can't keep from sing - ing, the

A love so sear - ing we can't keep from sing - ing, the

T the

B the

Measures 12-13 of the musical score. The Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B) parts are shown with lyrics. The Piano accompaniment is shown in the bottom system with a grand staff. The lyrics for the Soprano and Alto parts are: "love so sear - ing we can't keep from sing - ing, the". The lyrics for the Tenor and Bass parts are: "the". The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a single note in the left hand.

14 *poco cresc.* *mf*

lum-in-ous line of the map in the dark, the vi - gil flame in the house of the heart, the

poco cresc. *mf*

lum-in-ous line of the map in the dark, the vi - gil flame in the house of the heart, the

poco cresc. *mf*

lum-in-ous line of the map in the dark, the vi - gil flame in the house of the heart, the

poco cresc. *mf*

lum-in-ous line of the map in the dark, the vi - gil flame in the house of the heart, the

poco cresc. *mf*

lum-in-ous line of the map in the dark, the vi - gil flame in the house of the heart, the

16

love so sear - ing we can't keep from sing-ing, from cry-ing out. _____

love so sear - ing we can't keep from sing-ing, from cry-ing out. _____

love so sear - ing we can't keep from sing-ing, from cry-ing out. _____

love so sear - ing we can't keep from sing-ing, from cry-ing out. _____

love so sear - ing we can't keep from sing-ing, from cry-ing out. _____

19 *mp*

Per-haps it does not _____ be - gin.

mp

Per-haps it does not _____ be - gin.

(as an echo) *mp*

Per-haps it does not be - gin. _____

(as an echo) *mp*

Per-haps it does not be - gin. _____

mp

22

Per-haps it is al - ways. Per-haps it

Per-haps it is al - ways. Per - haps it

Per - haps it _____ is al - ways. _____ Per -

Per - haps it _____ is al - ways. _____ Per -

24 *mf*

takes a life-time to op-en our eyes, — to learn to see— the

mf

takes a life-time to op-en our eyes, — to learn to see— the

mf

⁸ haps it takes a life-time — to op-en — our eyes and see— the

mf

haps it takes a life - time — to op-en — our eyes and see— the

27

lum-in-ous line of the map in the dark, the vi - gil flame in the house of the heart, the

lum-in-ous line of the map in the dark, the vi - gil flame in the house of the heart, the

⁸ line in the dark and the flame in the heart, and the

line in the dark and the flame in the heart and the

mf

29

love so sear - ing we can't keep from sing - ing, the

love so sear - ing we can't keep from sing - ing, the

love so sear - ing we can't keep from sing - ing, the

love so sear - ing we can't keep from sing - ing, the

31

lum-in-ous line of the map in the dark, the vi - gil flame in the house of the heart, the

lum-in-ous line of the map in the dark, the vi - gil flame in the house of the heart, the

line in the dark and the flame in the heart, and the

line in the dark and the flame in the heart and the

33

love so sear - ing we can't keep from sing-ing, from cry - ing out.

love so sear - ing we can't keep from sing-ing, from cry - ing out.

love so sear - ing we can't keep from sing-ing, from cry - ing out.

love so sear - ing we can't keep from sing-ing, from cry - ing out.

sub. *p*

36

p

Per-haps this day the light be - gins, _____

p

Per-haps this day the light be - gins, _____

39

f Per-haps this day the light be-

mp Per-haps this day the light be-gins, _____ *f* Per-haps this

mp Per-haps this day the light be-gins, _____ *f* Per-haps this

mp Per-haps this day the light be-gins, _____ *f* Per-

mp *f*

42 (stay strong)

gins in us, _____ Per-haps this day the light be-gins, _____

(stay strong)

day _____ the light be-gins, Per-haps this day the light be-gins, _____

(stay strong)

8 day the light be-gins in us, Per-haps this day the light be-gins, _____

(stay strong)

haps the light be-gins in us, Per-haps this day the light be-gins, _____

(stay strong)

rall. ----- a tempo

45 *mf* (poco) *mp*

We are where the light be-gins. Per-haps it does not___ be-

mf (poco) *mp*

We are where the light be-gins. Per-haps it does not___ be-

mf (poco) *mp*

We are where the light be-gins. Per-haps it does not___ be-

mf (poco) *mp*

We are where the light be-gins. Per-haps it does not___ be-

mf *mp*

48 rit. -----

gin. Per-haps it is al - ways.

gin. Per-haps it is al - ways.

gin. Per-haps it is al - ways.

gin. Per-haps it is al - ways.