

A Light exists in Spring

based on the poem by Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

Christopher Lee Fraley

unaccompanied mixed voices
SATB

Perusal Score

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*My name is Chris Fraley. I'm a composer from Kona, Hawaii (previously from the less sunny Seattle area). **I need your help!** I am looking for choirs to partner with—either as a composer-in-residence, to commission new pieces, or simply to perform music I've already written. Please check out my website www.FraleyMusic.com, call my cell 425-829-9654, or email me at Chris@FraleyMusic.com to discuss possibilities.*

Thank you!

Instrumentation

SATB (a cappella)

Performance Time

approximately 3'30"

A Light exists in Spring

A Light exists in Spring
Not present on the Year
At any other period—
When March is scarcely here

A Color stands abroad
On Solitary Fields
That Science cannot overtake
But Human Nature feels.

It waits upon the Lawn,
It shows the furthest Tree
Upon the furthest Slope you know
It almost speaks to you.

Then as Horizons step
Or Noons report away
Without the Formula of sound
It passes and we stay—

A quality of loss
Affecting our Content
As Trade had suddenly encroached
Upon a Sacrament.

— *Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)*

A Light exists in Spring

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

Christopher Lee Fraley
(F. 177)

Moderately, but with forward momentum (ca. ♩ = 100)

S. *mf* A light, a light, a light ex-ists in Spring not pre-sent

A. *mf* A light, a light, a light, light ex-ists in Spring not pre-sent

T. *mf* A light not pre-sent on the *p*

B. *mf* A light not pre-sent on the *p*

7 *mp* at a - ny oth - er per - iod— *p* *poco rit.* *pp* *molto* *a tempo* *f* a col - or

8 *p* when March is scarce - ly here— *pp* *molto* *f* a col - or

9 year, a col - or

10 year, a col - or

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14

stands a - broad on sol - i - ta - ry fields that Sci - ence can - not ov - er -
stands a - broad on sol - i - ta - ry fields that Sci - ence can - not ov - er -
stands a - broad

19

take, but *mf*
take, but *mf*
but Hu - man Na - ture, Hu - man Na - ture feels. Oh, Hu - man Na - ture feels, but *mf*
but Hu - man Na - ture feels, Hu - man, Hu - man Na - ture feels, but *mf*

26

poco rall. *a tempo*

Hu - man, Hu - man Na - ture feels. A light, a light, a light ex - ists in Spring;
Hu - man Na - ture feels. A light, a light, a light, light ex - ists in
Hu - man Na - ture feels.
Hu - man Na - ture feels. It

34 **Slower** (ca. ♩ = 90)

p *sfp* *sfp* *sfp*

It waits... Lawn, tree,

p *mp* *sfp*

Spring; It waits up-on the lawn, tree,

p *sfp* *sfp* *mp*

It waits... Lawn, it shows the fur-thest tree,

sfp *sfp* *sfp* *mp*

waits... Lawn, tree up - on the fur-thest

(Opt. solo; tutti otherwise)

42 it al - most speaks to you. **Tempo I poco accel.**

mp

slope you know you. Oo

mf

slope you know you. Then as ho - ri-zons step,

mp *mf*

slope you know you. Oo or

mp

slope you know you. Oo

50 **molto rall.** **a tempo**

mf *mf*

with - out the For - mu - la of Sound, it pass - es, and we

mp

Oo

mp

noons re - port a - way, Oo

57 *mf* *mp*

stay— A qual-i-ty of loss, af-fect-ing our con-tent,

mp *mf*

stay— Loss, con-tent, as if

mp *mf* *mf*

stay— A qual-i-ty of loss af-fect-ing our con-tent,

mp

stay— Loss, con-tent,

65 *mp* *mf* (Opt. solo; tutti otherwise)

Trade had en-croached up-on a Sa-cra-ment.

Trade had en-croached

en-croached a Sa-cra-ment, a

en-croached a Sa-cra-

73 (tutti) *pp* **molto rit.** (3"30')

(A light...)

pp (A light...)

Sa-cra-ment. (A light...)

ment, a Sa-cra-ment. (A light...)

off Jan 2020

Program Note

On the surface, “A Light exists in Spring” captures Emily Dickinson’s feelings during an ephemeral experience of Nature—that particular light that is unique to early Spring. But there is a wonderful depth in her writing, including insights about how Nature moves us to feel, the relationship between contentment and Nature, and our experience of the passing of the intangible.

My SATB choral setting of the poem uses a major second (a whole step) to represent the “Light”—such harmonies sound “bright” to our ears. The opening of the piece is filled with this color, and the music at “A Color stands abroad” has harmonies rich with major seconds. Interestingly, resolving this harmonic interval as a suspension produces a particular emotional response—I use this to evoke the line “But Human Nature feels” throughout the entire piece, as a major theme of the poem is our emotional response to the Light and how it colors everything we experience. So too, these suspensions color the music... until “it passes and we stay”.

Dickinson hints, though, that the experience stays with us even through its loss—it is felt as an absence, affecting us yet again. Being an optimist, however, I suggest that this loss—the mundane encroaching on the sacred—does not completely prevail: our memory of those mysteries persists. Thus, my setting ends with a persistent hint of the Light—our memory of its impact on us.

Performance Notes

All tempos are approximate.

If necessary, the ♩ triplet rhythms may be simplified to ♩ throughout the piece (mm 8, 16, 37, 39, 41, 50, 59-63).

The tenuto marks in measures 27-29 (S), 38 (A), 40 (T), 42 are intended to have a “leaned into” feel. The tenuto marks in measures 27-29 and 42 may include a slight lengthening as well, if desired.

The bass *divisi* in measure 28 may be simplified to just the G, if necessary.

The *sfp* marks in measures 34-40 are intended to be a bell-like effect and should be light (rather than a heavy-handed accent).

There is an optional soprano solo at the end of measure 43 through measure 47. When a soloist is used, the passage may be sung freely, with the *tutti* joining on “you” (downbeat of measure 46). Note the choir will have to be very careful not to accent “you”.

When no solo is desired, either the entire soprano section or any fraction thereof may sing the stem up notes, with the entire section joining at “you”, being careful not to accent the word.

“Oo” (mm 48-54) is the IPA vowel [u]: a pure, non-diphthong, Italian “u”.

Be careful not to place any accent on the “-la” syllable of “Formula” in measure 53.

When a soloist is used, the optional soprano solo in measures 67 (beat 3) - 71 may be sung freely.

The tenor and bass lines in measures 69 through 80 is best sung by an even division of voices: half the tenors and basses on the “tenor” line, and half the tenors and basses on the “bass” line.

The duration of measure 79 may be rendered shorter than notated—please feel free to intuit the right duration for your performance.

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Choral Music

<i>Catalog</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Instrumentation</i>	<i>Duration</i>
F. 155	Missa Brevis	SATB	20:00
F. 156	An End	SSATBB	10:00
F. 170	Break, Break, Break	SATB	5:00
F. 166	Reminiscence	SATB, Piano	3:50
F. 163a	Hine Ma Tov	SATB, Piano <i>(SSA & a cappella also available)</i>	4:20
F. 162	Aus alten Marchen	SATB	2:00
F. 154	The Plains	SATB	3:15
F. 152	Wistful Wind	SATB	3:00
F. 150	Golden Stars	SATB	3:30
F. 145	Requiescat	Tenor solo, SATB	3:30
F. 164	Famine Song	SATB, Drum	3:00
F. 140	Flanders Field	SATB, Piano	3:10
F. 139	I Shall Not Care	SATB	2:40

Art Song

F. 157b	Lost Delight	Voice, Piano, Flute	4:00
F. 142	Wind of the Western Sea	Voice, Piano	2:35
F. 141	Remember or Forget	Voice, Piano	1:20
F. 151	To Sarah	Voice, Piano	2:50
F. 143	Last Flower	Voice, Piano	3:30
F. 118	A Lonely Offering Never Ends	Harp, Voice	3:40
F. 111	Only You	Cello, Guitar, Voice	3:10
F. 108	The Crossing	String Quartet, Horn, Voice	3:14
F. 106	A Thought for Your Penny	Voice, Piano	1:40
F. 104	Nursing Home	Voice, Piano	2:30
F. 101	Perceptions	Voice, Piano	2:45

Christmas / Sacred

F. 165	Let All Mortal Flesh	SATB	3:00
F. 160	Let Us Be Merry (Billings)	SATB	3:40
F. 159	Cradle Hymn (Parker)	SATB, Piano	3:40
F. 153	Now Thank We All Our God	SATB, Organ, Trumpet	3:45
F. 144	Reborn by Living Water	SATB, Piano	3:40
F. 138	In the Shadow of the Son	SATB, Organ or Violin, Clarinet, Bassoon, & Cello	6:00
F. 112	Psalm 25	Organ, Voice	3:30

...as well as orchestral and chamber music

