## JOAN SZYMKO

# Be It Therefore Resolved

poem by

Kim Stafford for sssa chorus, optional ssa trio piano, violin and cello



#### Kim Stafford (b.1949)

Kim Stafford is the founding director of the Northwest Writing Institute at Lewis & Clark College, and author of a dozen books of poetry and prose. He approaches writing as a chance to set down stories we have carried into poems, essays, radio commentaries, blessings, rants, parables, and other forms of *tikkun olam*, the healing of the world. Stafford writes: "In our time is a great thing not yet done. It is the marriage of Woody Guthrie's gusto and the Internet. It is the composing and wide sharing of generous expression in the voices of many for the needs of all."

Friend: Download This Free Proclamation for Local Use

Whereas the world is a house on fire; Whereas the nations are filled with shouting: Whereas hope seems small, sometimes a single bird on a wire left by migration behind. Whereas kindness is seldom in the news and peace an abstraction while war is real; Whereas my words are all I have; Whereas my life is short; Whereas I am afraid: Whereas I am free—despite all fire and anger and fear; Be it therefore resolved a song shall be my calling— a song not yet made shall be vocation and peaceful words the work of my remaining days.

#### **Composer Notes**

Kim Stafford's poem found its way to my attention by way of a singer in my community choir. She passed it on to me, knowing how I am always seeking powerful, transformative texts for my choral compositions. Stafford had disseminated his poem on the internet in 2005. "Friend: Download this Free Proclamation for Local Use," immediately piqued my interest. I deeply resonate with the theme of hopelessness met with personal resolve found in this powerful poem. As a choral composer and conductor, I have always felt a calling to use words and sounds to provide a platform for community. Community that is also a place of sanctuary where singer and listener can openly express compassion and feel her/his own emotional vulnerabilities. And so I feel a great affinity with the "vocation" expressed in the resolution of the proclamation. This feeling was confirmed, when after Kim Stafford heard "Be It Therefore Resolved" for the first time, he wrote to me: "I don't know that I have ever experienced such an intimate and generous consideration of something I have written as heard in your setting, word by word, syllable by syllable."

When I first sent the poem to David Simmons, director of the Congressional Chorus, for consideration as CC's commission text, it was without realizing that legislative resolutions are written in the same format as Stafford's poem; an auspicious coincidence! When reading an offical proclamation aloud, one does not usually repeat lines of text. So with the exceptions of the opening cries of "fire" and "shouting," this setting is through composed, free flowing without repitition of lyrics within voice parts.

In performing this work, special care should be made in adhering to tempo and articulation markings, as these elements play a particularly expressive role.

- Joan Szymko

#### Joan Szymko (b.1957)

Joan Szymko's choral music is regularly performed at regional, national and international festivals, competitions and conferences; including at eight consecutive national conference of the American Choral Directors Association (2003-17). The ACDA recognized her contribution to the choral arts by awarding Szymko the prestigious Raymond W. Brock Memorial Commission in 2010. For more information visit joanszymko.com.



### Be It Therefore Resolved

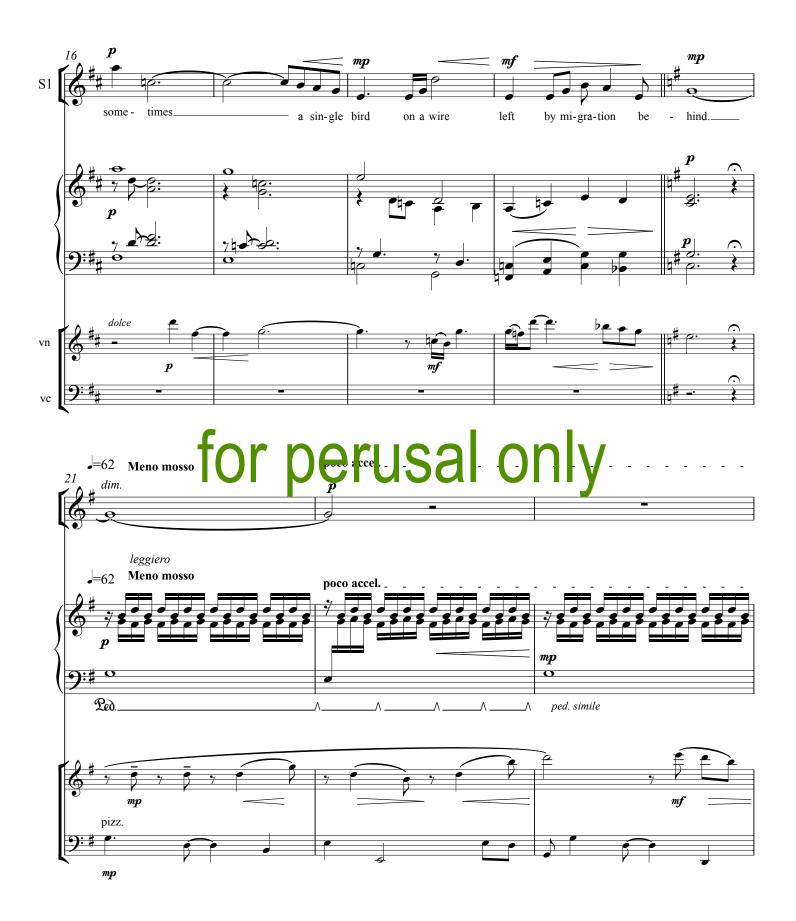














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