

JS-085 / Nothing Short of Grace / SSA, piano / dur:3:30

JOAN SZYMKO

*Commissioned by Carthage College, Kenosha, WI
for the 2018 Lakeside Women's Choir Invitational Festival*

Nothing Short of Grace

SSA Chorus
&
piano

JOAN SZYMKO MUSIC



JOAN SZYMKO (b.1957)

Joan Szymko's choral music is regularly performed at national and international choral festivals, competitions and conferences. While using a familiar music vocabulary, she creates works that are nonetheless fresh and

engaging; compelling and inspiring, her text selections are as notable as her music. Szymko is widely recognized as a prominent composer of exceptional repertoire for women's choir. The American Choral Director's Association recognized Szymko's lasting impact on the choral arts in America by selecting her as a recipient of a prestigious Raymond W. Brock Memorial Commission in 2010.

Szymko lives and works in the beautiful Pacific Northwest. As resident composer she enjoyed a fruitful collaboration with Portland based *Do Jump! Movement Theater*, (1995-2012) creating vocal underscoring for major touring productions. A dynamic conductor she has served on the choral music faculty of Portland State University (2013-15) and has led *Aurora Chorus* as Artistic Director since 1993. As a visiting artist, Szymko workshops her compositions with choirs in a variety of educational and festival settings across the country and abroad.

Nothing Short of Grace

To take one step takes courage.

To take one step takes heart.

It takes heart.

*But to keep going, never knowing
what may lie ahead.*

*To choose the unknown and
look fear in the face:*

That is nothing short of grace.

To take one step takes courage.

To take one step takes heart.

It takes heart.

*Sister, keep going,
though you may not know what lies ahead.*

*Choose the unknown and
look fear in the face:*

That is nothing short of grace.

PROGRAM NOTES

Nothing Short of Grace was commissioned by Carthage College (Kenosha, WI) to be premiered by the mass chorus of singers participating in its 2018 Lakeside Women's Choir Invitational Festival. Dr. Peter Denee, festival planner and director of *Carthage Women's Ensemble*, requested a piece that would be accessible to singers of varying skill levels as well as be an addition to my **Dare to Be Powerful** choral series. This series features compelling, passionate settings of inspiring words of women poets, social justice advocates and brazen feminists. These titles are intended to cultivate dialogue and foster understanding of the challenges facing women today. (See more about *Dare to Be Powerful* at <joanszymko.com>)

The lyric is appropriate for any occasion as a reflection on challenges that require inner fortitude. However, the work was inspired by the #MeToo movement and I dedicate it to all of those who have taken that courageous first step in breaking their silence around experiences of sexual harassment, assault or abuse. —Joan Szymko

PERFORMANCE NOTES

Sing all notes values for full duration. (Avoid the tendency to shorten, or clip the word "step" when sung as an eighth note.) When the melodic line changes from short interrupted movement (hesitance) to being expressed with continuity (confidence) at M19, make the most of it! Sing with an expressive legato. There are no *ritards* in this piece. It is very important to keep the tempo steady throughout!

Explore possible changes in vocal tone color as singers move from expressions of hesitancy/vulnerability to those of courage and forthrightness.

Commissioned by Carthage College, Kenosha, WI for the 2018 Lakeside Women's Choir Invitational Festival.
Premiere performance given on April 18, 2018 by Carthage Women's Ensemble, Peter Dennee, Director
Crystal Lake Central High School Advanced Treble Choir, Kimberly Scherrer / Germantown High School Cantanti, Jonathan Brooks
Muskego High School Sorelle Cantanti, Genevieve Michels / Pewaukee High School Treble Choir, Tasha Igielski
Prairie Ridge High School Bel Canto Choir, David R. Jensen

Nothing Short of Grace

lyric by Joan Szymko*

Joan Szymko
ASCAP

Con moto ♩=136 Tutti Unison *p*

To take one step,

Piano

p

Ped.

5 *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

to take one step takes cou- rage.

Ped.

9

To take one step, to take one step takes

Ped.

13

S heart. It takes heart, it takes heart, it takes

S heart. It takes heart, it takes heart, it takes

A heart. It takes heart, it takes

pedal simile

for perusal

only

17

heart, it takes heart. But to keep go - ing,

heart, it takes heart. But to keep go - ing,

heart, it takes heart.

21

S *mp*
ne-ver know-ing what may lie a-head; to choose the un-known

S *mp*
ne-ver know-ing what may lie a-head; to choose the un-known

A *mp*
nev - er know-ing what may lie a-head; to choose the un-known

mp

for perusal
only

25

mf
and look fear in the face, look fear in the face, look

mf
look fear in the face, look

mf

29

S fear in the face, look fear in the face: That is noth-ing short of grace, that is noth-ing

S fear in the face, look fear in the face: That is noth-ing short of grace, that is noth-ing

A Look fear, look fear— in the face: That is noth-ing short of grace, that is noth-ing

for perusal only

33

short of grace. To take one

short of grace. To take

short of grace.

mp p p

resume ped.

36

S *mp* step, to take one step takes cou - rage.

S *mp* one step, to take one step, takes cou - rage.

A

mp

for perusal
only

40

mf To take one step, to take one

mf To take one step, to take one

mp To take one step, *mf* to take

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51

S
Sis-ter, keep go - ing, _____ though you may not know what lies a -

S
Sis-ter, keep go - ing, _____ though you may not know what lies a -

A
Sis-ter, keep go - ing, _____ though you may not know what lies a -

f

for perusal
only

55

mf *mp* *p*

head; to choose the un - known _____ and look

mf *mp* *p*

head; to choose the un - known _____ and look

mf *mp* *p*

head; to choose the un - known _____ and look

mf *mp*

58

S fear in the face, look fear in the face, to look

S fear in the face, look fear in the face, to look

A fear in the face, look fear in the face,

mp *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp*

cresc. poco a poco

for perusal only

61

fear in the face, look fear in the face: That is noth-ing short of grace, that is noth-ing

fear in the face, look fear in the face: that is noth-ing

look fear look fear in the face: that is noth-ing

f *f* *f*

65

S *mf* *mp* *p*
short of grace. That is noth-ing short of grace.

S *mp* *mf* *mp* *p*
short of grace. That is noth-ing short of grace.

A *mf* *mp* *p*
short of grace. That is noth-ing short of grace.

mf *mp* *p*

for perusal
only

68

mp *p*
Sis- ter, keep go - ing,

mp *p*
Sis- ter, keep go - ing,

mp *p*
Sis- ter, keep go - ing,

p