

CME Conductor's Choice

# Matins

John Burge

Doreen Rao's

Choral MUSIC

-experience-

BOOSEY (7) HAWKES



### PROGRAM NOTE

Matins is a setting of a poem written by the Canadian poet, Eugene McNamara. The work is scored for choir and piano and was commissioned by The Windsor Classic Chorale, Richard Householder. Music Director. For many people, the word, "matins," will be familiar as the name for the first of the seven canonical hours, properly beginning at midnight but sometimes starting at daybreak. The Anglican Church uses the term interchangeably for their service known as Morning Prayer. A more secular interpretation can be found when the word is used to simply describe a morning song, as in bird song. McNamara's poem captures all of these meanings in lines that can be interpreted from viewpoints both secular and spiritual. There is even an obvious sacred reference when the poem emphatically states, "and we shall gather at the river," which alludes to the opening question of the famous hymn, "Shall we gather at the river."

A prominent feature of the music is the opening melodic gesture that the choir sings to the words, "Bells in far off steeples summon." This musical motive is heard throughout the work, often in the piano accompaniment. To have set this poem without incorporating the melody of the hymn, "Shall We Gather At The River," would have been a lost opportunity on the composer's part and John Burge does not disappoint the listener here.

# THE TEXT

**MATINS** 

Bells in far off steeples summon and birds announce morning—

bellsong birdsong-

Come and walk with me my love listen to what my eyes sing to you: I will not let you go-

As a man carries a glass of water to his child in the night-not a drop will fall the bough will not break and we shall gather at the river—

Remember the dry light over the ocean and the long grass in morning light and wild ponies running on the beach plunging in the surf their manes shaking in the wind? Remember the prairie swift seen between the freight cars?

The prairie will be there when the trains long gone the ponies will be there when we return—

Here are trees shaking swaying in the wind and staying in calm silence—

Train horns in the hills the hoarse muttering of the river where it falls—

What I hold in my hands not a drop will spill and the bough will not break and we shall gather at the river and I will not let you go—

- Eugene McNamara (used by permission of the poet)

# **ABOUT THE COMPOSER**

John Burge was born in Dryden, Ontario, in 1961. He holds degrees from the University of Toronto (B.Mus and M.Mus) and the University of British Columbia (D.M.A.)where his composition professors included John Beckwith. Buczynski, Stephen Chatman, John Hawkins and Derek Holman. Since 1987 he has been teaching at the School of Music, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. Burge's compositional output is marked by a number of major choral works including Thank You God, for children's choir and chamber orchestra (available on rental from Boosey & Hawkes). Other individually published titles include, I Thank You God (M-051-46748-8), O Lord, Hear My Voice Today (M-051-46749-5), Love Divine (M-051-32880-2), and Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue (M-051-47125-6). Simple Songs is published separately as: The Coat (M-051-47295-6), Silverly (M-051-47296-3), Secrets (M-051-47297-0), and Epilogue (M-051-7298-7).

## PERFORMANCE TIME

ca. 14 minutes

A complete and comprehensive choral performance curriculum for beginning choirs can be found in the music textbook **WE WILL SING!** published by Boosey & Hawkes (M-051-80810-6).

# **MATINS**

for SATB Chorus & Piano

Words by

Music by



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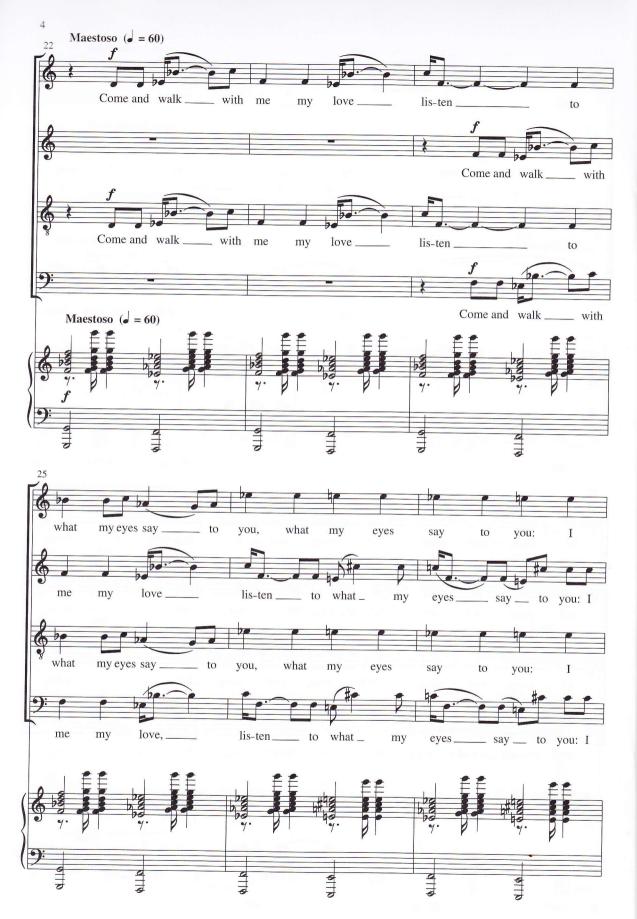
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