

# *Songs of Youth*

## Performance Notes

Songs of Youth is a cycle of seven songs for baritone or bass and marimba. A five-octave, concert grand marimba is preferred, but the songs may also be performed on a quality four-octave marimba. Performers may elect to perform individual songs independently or the entire cycle in sequence (lasting approximately 19-23 minutes). The following timings are only approximate:

1. Wandering (4:17)
2. The Bumblebee (1:40)
3. Wondering (3:23)
4. California Lullaby (4:00)
5. Summer-soon Storm (2:25)
6. Apart (3:40)
7. The Resonance of Memory (1:43)

The form of the cycle is generally palindromic, or symmetrical, with the fourth song functioning as the center for the piece. This means that songs 1/7, 2/6, and 3/5 correspond in subject matter (contrasting but related topics) and principal tonal center (generally identical). The primary exception to this pattern is intentional: the last song doesn't return to the opening tonal center of the cycle, just as we never fully return to our youth.

Most of the marimba writing is admittedly not suited for the beginner. Even the fourth song, though not technically challenging, is musically demanding. All songs except for the second and seventh require four mallets. The sections in which the vocalist and the marimbist perform together demand a greater-than-normal level of rhythmic precision from both performers. Sections where one performer performs alone may be treated more flexibly. At all times the drama of the texts should be the focal point of the performance.

Mark Feezell  
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## **1. Wandering**

I heard it in the wide places.  
Stars played out across their breezy courses,  
fixing paths of light!

Old debris of yesterday.  
Wander watching where the river runs,  
New green washing the great plain.  
Tendrils rising, reaching, finding  
Paths of light and life and love.

Not I, a song, new rhyme, old tune.  
Fixing paths of light, and life, and love.

Whistling, smacking, laughing joy, and fear and trembling.  
Wander in the great place, an open space,  
To catch the honeysuckle sunset with your open arms!

## **2. The Bumblebee**

I was searching for a rock I dropped into the stream,  
Watching squirrels run and wishing I could eat ice cream.  
There was a tumble, jumble bumblebee, but I didn't see.

I was counting clouds go by and wond'ring how things grow,  
All the time I didn't know  
There was a tumble, jumble, not-a-very-humble,  
makes-a-little-mumble bumblebee staring right at me.

Then I moved too close -too bad-  
'cause then the bumblebee was mad!  
A tumble, jumble, not-a-very-humble,  
makes-a-little-mumble, fumble, grumble,  
really-wants-to-rumble, hope I don't a-stumble,  
(Oh, I'm gonna crumble!)

Bumblebee flying after me!

### 3. Wondering

I wonder why the clouds are high, and where the butter flies-  
Can I go to where I'm thinking of, or is it just imagining?

Why does the rain stick on the glass?  
Why is green the color for the grass?  
Where did the wind go when it passed?  
And why can't snails go very fast?

Why does the mouse run from the cat?  
Why does granddad always wear a hat?  
Why is a cave the place for bats?  
And why is the bullfrog so fat?

Why does the sun give way to rain?  
Why is grandma in so much pain?  
Will people want me in their game,  
or will they just be ashamed?

### 4. California Lullaby (*Instrumental*)

#### 5. Summer-soon storm

Black and brim-full of windy rain,  
and ice chunked out to break,  
and fire sparked out to burn.  
Stating, not asking, moving, not hesitating,  
Running, not walking, washing  
Old debris of yesterday gully-dirt down into the sea.

A storm with winter on its breath, and summer at its back.  
Summer-soon storm to bring the flowers down.

Crazy flowers spackled o'er the sky, or is it the earth?  
Bound we are to this old dirt, but we will fly.  
Spring is good 'cause summer-soon storms  
wash down our winter mush.  
Flowers come quickly when we wait-  
How long? How much? How late?

This wind I know, this gale I taste  
Blows fresh in from the Far-off Place.  
Just right, salty fresh, a kicking horse  
with a bite to fight, what a night!

## **6. Apart**

Missing you, you are here.  
Your voice is in the willowtop.

Soon I will taste your lush embrace  
and kiss your sunny cheek again,  
How sweet to drink of you beyond the span of waiting here!  
Like the sunlight streaming I will come for you,  
Like the moonlight beaming I will search for you,  
Held in dizzy dreaming I will run to you by standing still.  
Many waters cannot quench love.

Your voice is in the willowtop that weeps to call me home.

## **7. The Resonance of Memory**

So many days passed away.  
Silences, the years, they never stay,  
Where have they gone to, those things I thought I knew?  
Oh, Lord, let me love this day, let me take it, let me turn it,  
Let me learn it - I could never earn it.  
Oh, Lord, aren't we always children to you?!!