

Three American Songs
for SATB chamber choir, unaccompanied

8 minutes

Brooke Joyce (1993)

Premiered at Lawrence University, 1993

Program Note:

I. "Pan," Ralph Waldo Emerson

O what are heroes, prophets, men,
But pipes through which the breath of Pan doth blow
A momentary music. Being's tide
Swells hitherward, and myriads of forms
Live, robed with beauty, painted by the sun;
Their dust, pervaded by the nerves of God,
Throbs with an overmastering energy
Knowing and doing. Ebbs the tide, they lie
White hollow shells upon the desert shore,
But not the less the eternal wave rolls on
To animate new millions, and exhale
Races and planets, its enchanted foam.

II. "There came a wind like a bugle," Emily Dickinson

There came a wind like a bugle;
It quivered through the grass,
And a green chill upon the heat
So ominous did pass
We barred the windows and the doors
As from an emerald ghost;
The doom's electric moccasin
That very instant passed.
On a strange mob of panting trees,
And fences fled away,
And rivers where the houses ran
The living looked that day.
The bell within the steeple wild

The flying tidings whirled.
How much can come
And much can go,
And yet abide the world!

III. "Each small gleam was a voice," Stephen Crane

Each small gleam was a voice,
A lantern voice --
In little songs of carmine, violet, green, gold.
A chorus of colours came over the water;
The wondrous leaf-shadow no longer wavered,
No pines crooned on the hills,
The blue night was elsewhere a silence,
When the chorus of colours came over the water,
Little songs of carmine, violet, green, gold.

Small glowing pebbles
Thrown on the dark plane of evening
Sing good ballads of God
And eternity, with soul's rest.
Little priests, little holy fathers,
None can doubt the truth of your hymning,
When the marvelous chorus comes over the water,
Songs of carmine, violet, green, gold.