

SATB
a cappella
duration: 2:00



Jo-Michael Schertz

CHORAL SERIES

Emerald Stream

by
Seth Houston



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About the composer/poet

Choral conductor, composer, and scholar Seth Houston (b. 1974) is currently pursuing a D.M.A. in choral music at the University of Southern California Thornton School of Music, where he studies with Morten Lauridsen, Jo-Michael Scheibe, Nick Strimple, Donald Brinegar, and Cristian Grases. Houston is director of music at Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Santa Monica, co-conductor of USCThornton University Chorus, and co-conductor of Canticum



Novum L.A. Houston holds a M.M. in choral conducting from the University of Colorado and a B.Mus. in composition from Oberlin Conservatory of Music. He also taught middle school and high school choir for eight years. Houston's compositions are widely performed throughout North America and Europe and have been included on numerous recordings. For more information on Houston's choral activities, please visit www.sethhouston.com

About the piece

Houston composed *Emerald Stream* on his seventeenth birthday while paddling a canoe. The young composer was on a month-long canoe trip with his father in northern Canada. Although the weather on much of the trip had been windy and foul, his birthday dawned sunny and clear. The music that would become *Emerald Stream* flowed to the rhythm of his paddle. While Houston notated much of *Emerald Stream* in his journal that night, some details of the music were worked out after he returned home and had access to a piano.

The piece draws inspiration from the "shape-note" singing tradition that flourished in New England from 1780 to 1820. Like a shape-note "fuging" tune, *Emerald Stream* features a hearty, strong sound, an imitative fuging section, melodic ornaments, open intervals, and doubling at the octave. It is unusual, however, in that the melody is in the bass part. The text draws on the hymn-writing style of Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley, and other great theologians whose dynamic poetry animated the shape-note tradition. While drawing on these traditions, *Emerald Stream* proclaims a more contemporary message of environmental stewardship.

Emerald Stream was initially popularized by Village Harmony and Northern Harmony. It has been sung throughout North America and Europe at venues including Garrison Keillor's A Prairie Home Companion and the Christmas Revels.

Emerald Stream

by Seth Houston

Come, now, and gather in the glade
Where the Em'rald Stream and the Evening Shade,
And meditate on the works He's made,
Great God, our sov'reign Lord.

Join us, now, the meadow is green
And the waters pure and the woods serene
And the flowing air is fresh and clean
Where God his blessings pour'd.

See the wind come down,
Hear it whistle as it blows,
It brings us sun and it brings us snows,
A blessing from above.

And the sun comes up,
And the sun goes down,
And the stars and the moon go 'round and 'round,
In witness to His love.

Hear, now, ye sons of men,
For danger lurks in this great garden;
The Lord will visit once again
To see what we have done.

As God is the shepherd and we are the sheep,
We our mother Earth must keep,
Maintain the air, protect the deep;
At Judgment Day He'll come.

See the Lord come down,
Hear Him whistle as he goes,
He bears a thunderbolt and a rose,
Remember all his pow'r.

See the Lord come down, face shining bright,
His holy feet are soiled
But his robe is white;
You will regret that hour.

So, now, my people beware,
You're in charge of the seas and the earth and the air,
You'd better take extr'ordinary care
Of the Earth, our only home.

All glory be to God on high,
Shout praises loudly to the sky,
Listen to the Earth and hear her cry,
And in Heaven forever roam.

Range



S A T B

Listen to a recording at www.sbmp.com

Performed by Village Harmony - conducted by Larry Gordon

Emerald Stream

Seth Houston

Rollicking $\text{♩} = 88$
mf

B 

Come, now, and gath-er in the glade where the Em-'rald Stream and the



Eve - ning Shade and med - i - tate on the works_ He's_ made, great

9

mf

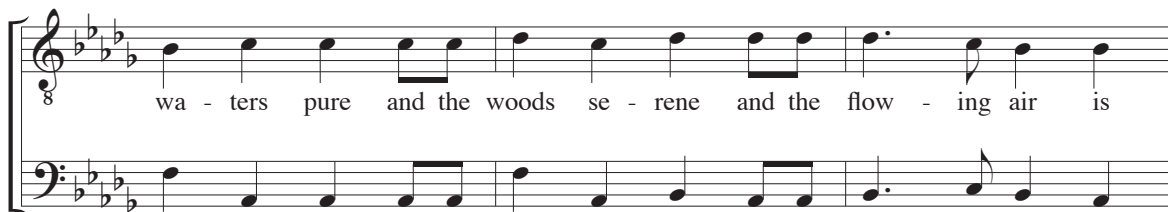
T 

Join us, now, the mead-ow is green and the

B 

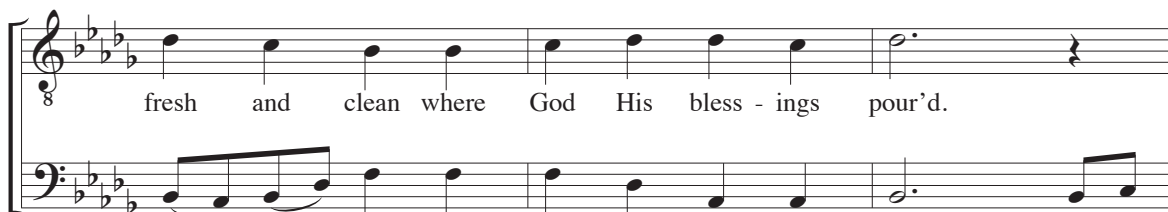
God, our sov-'reign Lord.

Join us, now, the mead-ow is_ green and the



wa - ters pure and the woods se - rene and the flow - ing air is

wa - ters pure and the woods se - rene and the flow - ing air is



fresh and clean where God His bless - ings pour'd.

fresh_ and_ clean where God His bless - ings pour'd. Feel the

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1046-3

mf cresc. poco a poco

S
A
T
B

mf cresc. poco a poco Feel the
cresc. poco a poco Feel the wind come down, hear it
cresc. poco a poco Feel the wind come down, hear it whis-tle—
cresc. poco a poco wind come down, hear it whis-tle as it goes, it brings us sun and it

for rehearsal only, senza pedale
mf cresc. poco a poco

wind— come— down, hear it whis-tle as it blows, a
 whis-tle as it goes, _____ a
 as— it— goes, _____ a
 brings us snows, it blows, _____ a

*Ornaments are optional and may be sung by just a few tenors.

25

Musical score for the first system, including vocal lines and piano accompaniment. The score is in a key with three flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor) and a common time signature. It features four vocal staves and a grand staff for piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "bless - ing from a - bove, bless - ing from a - bove, bless - ing from a - bove, And the sun comes up, and the". Dynamics include *f* (forte) and *mp* (mezzo-piano) with a *cresc. poco a poco* (crescendo poco a poco) marking.

Musical score for the second system, including vocal lines and piano accompaniment. The score continues from the first system. The lyrics are: "And the sun_ comes_ And the sun comes up, and the sun goes sun comes up, and the sun goes 'round_ and_ sun_ goes_ down, and the stars and the moon go 'round and 'round, go". Dynamics include *mf* (mezzo-forte) with a *cresc. poco a poco* (crescendo poco a poco) marking.

up, and the sun_ goes_ down, in wit - ness to His love.

'round _____ in wit - ness to His love.

'round _____ in wit - ness to His love.

'round _____ in wit - ness to His love.

Hear now, ye sons of men, for dan - ger lurks in this great gar - den; the

33

Hear now, ye sons of men, for dan - ger lurks in this great gar - den; the

Hear now, ye sons_ of_ men, for dan - ger lurks in this great gar - den; the

Hear now, ye sons of men, for dan - ger lurks in this great gar - den; the

mf

As

mf

Lord will vis - it once a - gain to see what we have done. As

**mf*

As

Lord will vis - it once a - gain to see what we have done.

mf

41

God is the shep-herd and we are the sheep, we *>* our moth-er Earth must keep, main -

God is the shep-herd and we are the sheep, we *>* our moth-er Earth must keep, main -

God is the shep-herd and we are the sheep, we *>* our moth-er Earth must keep, main -

mf

*Tenor line may be doubled by sopranos (at the octave) from here to the end of the piece.