

# *Perplexed Music*

*Sonnet*  
*for SATB Choir (divisi)*

Music by  
**John Muehleisen**

Text by  
**Elizabeth Barrett Browning**

*Commissioned by The Esoterics*  
*Eric Banks, Artistic Director and Conductor*

*Dedicated to the memory of Michael Christian Krueger,*  
*for whom the Angels whisper— SWEET*

## PERPLEXED MUSIC

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO E. J.

EXPERIENCE, like a pale musician, holds  
A dulcimer of patience in his hand,  
Whence harmonies we cannot under-  
stand,  
Of God's will in His worlds, the strain  
unfolds  
In sad, perplexed minors. Deathly colds  
Fall on us while we hear and counter-  
mand  
Our sanguine heart back from the fancy-  
land  
With nightingales in visionary worlds.  
We murmur,—'Where is any certain  
tune  
Or measured music, in such notes as  
these?'—  
But angels, leaning from the golden seat,  
Are not so minded; their fine ear hath  
won  
The issue of completed cadences,  
And, smiling down the stars, they  
whisper— SWEET.

- *Elizabeth Barrett Browning*

## **Program Notes**

*Perplexed Music* was commissioned by Eric Banks and Seattle-based choral ensemble The Esoterics for a program made up entirely of musical settings of sonnets. When I read Elizabeth Barrett Browning's beautiful poem, it appealed to me immediately with its surreal images and musical references woven throughout. Ironically it did not immediately elicit a musical reaction from me, thus I was faced with something quite unfamiliar to me: a case of writer's block. It was not until a family tragedy struck that the poem resonated with me and my eyes were opened: our young niece and her husband lost their first-born child to a premature birth; he lived only five minutes. After receiving this news and allowing it to sink into our hearts, I returned to the text, and it came alive for me in a deeply poignant way. Rather than interpreting the text for the audience, I prefer to simply present the backstory and allow listeners to discover the meaning of the text for themselves, which I believe will yield a much more poignant experience of both the poem and the music. All that I will add is simply the dedication:

*Dedicated to the memory of Michael Christian Krueger,  
for whom the Angels whisper— SWEET*

## **Performances Notes**

1. Final consonants should be placed on the rest following the note(s) on which the syllable occurs.
2. Unless otherwise noted, when the women or men are divided in three parts (SSA, SAA, TTB, or TBB), divide the voices evenly between the three-parts. Three-part divisi that should be performed as distributed amongst the voices is noted as "div. as written."



# Perplexed Music

Commissioned by *The Esoterics*  
Eric Banks, Artistic Director and Conductor

Dedicated to the memory of Michael Christian Krueger  
for whom the Angels whisper—Sweet

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

John Muehleisen (2006)

**Adagio tranquillo** ♩ = 44

*mp* 2 3

Sopranos  
Ex - per - ience, like a pale mu - si - cian, holds A

*p*

Altos  
Ex - per - ience, like a pale mu - si - cian, holds A

*p*

Tenor  
Ex - per - ience, like a pale mu - si - cian, holds A

*p*

Bass  
Ex - per - ience, like a pale mu - si - cian, holds A

**Adagio tranquillo** ♩ = 44

*p*

Piano\*

\* for rehearsal only

4 (*mp*) div. as written----- 5 6

S dul-ci-mer of pa-tience in his hand, Whence har-mo-nies we can-not un-der-

A (*p*) div. as written-----  
dul - ci-mer of pa-tience in his hand, Whence har-mo-nies we can-not un-der-

T (*p*)  
dul-ci-mer of pa-tience in his hand, Whence har-mo-nies we can-not un-der-

B (*p*)  
dul-ci-mer of pa-tience in his hand, Whence har-mo-nies we can-not un-der-

Pno. (*p*)

7 *f* 8 *f* 9 10 11 *mp* 12 *f*

S stand, Of God's will in His worlds, the strain un-folds In

A stand, Of God's will in His worlds, the strain un-folds In

T stand, Of God's will in His worlds, the strain un-folds In

B stand, Of God's will in His worlds, the strain un-folds In

Pno. (*f*)

With motion ♩ = 52

div. as written-----

div. as written-----

With motion ♩ = 52

13 (*f*) 14 *ff* 15 *mf* // Moving forward ♩ = 60 17 *mf*

S sad, per-plex-ed mi-nors. Death-ly colds Fall on us

A sad, per-plex-ed mi-nors. Death-ly colds Fall on us

T sad, per-plex-ed mi-nors. Death-ly colds Fall on

B sad, per-plex-ed mi-nors. Death-ly colds Fall on

Pno. *f* *mf* *mf*

18 *mp* 19 *mp* 20 *f* 21 *ff* 22

S while we hear and coun-ter-mand Our sanguine heart back from the fan-cy-land

A while we hear and coun-ter-mand Our sanguine heart back from the fan-cy-land

T us while we hear and coun-ter-mand Our sanguine heart back from the fan-cy-land

B us while we hear and coun-ter-mand Our sanguine heart back from the fan-cy-land

Pno. *mp* *f* *ff*

With night-in - gales, with night - in - gales, with night - in - gales, with night - in - gales, with

*f* *mf*

23 24 25

S

A

T

B

Pno.

Text for S2 + A1: With night - in - gales, with night - in - gales, with night - in - gales, with night - in -

in vi - - - sion - ar - y

in vi - - - sion - ar - y

night - in - gales, with night - in - gales, with night - in - gales, with night - in - gales, Ah—

26 27

S

A

T

B

Pno.

gales, with night - in - gales, with night - in - gales, with night - in - gales, with night - in -

night - in - gales, with night - in - gales, with night - in - gales, with night - in - gales, Ah—

worlds. in vi - - - sion - ar - y

worlds. in vi - - - sion - ar - y





32 *mf* sempre senza espressione

S 'Where is an - y cer - tain tune

A *mf* sempre senza espressione

A 'Where is an - y cer - tain tune

T (*mp*)

8 We mur-mur, — We mur - mur, —

T2 (*mp*)

8 We mur-mur, — We mur - mur, —

B (*mp*)

mur-mur, — We mur - mur, — We

B2 (*mp*)

We mur-mur, — We mur - mur, —

Pno. (*mp*)

*mf* 2 2 2

33 2 2 2

led. led. led.

34 (mf) 35 2

S Or meas - ured mu - - - sic, in such

A Or meas - ured mu - - - sic, in such

T (mp) 8 We mur-mur, — We mur-mur, —

T2 (mp) 8 We mur-mur, — We mur-mur, —

B (mp) mur-mur, — We mur-mur, — We

B2 (mp) We mur - mur, — We mur-mur, —

Pno. (mf) (mp)

Lea. Lea. Lea. Lea.

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for a vocal ensemble and piano. It covers measures 34 and 35. The vocal parts are Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), Tenor 2 (T2), Bass (B), and Bass 2 (B2). The piano part (Pno.) is in the bottom system. The lyrics for the vocalists are: 'Or measured music, in such' for S and A; 'We mur-mur, —' for T and T2; 'mur-mur, — We mur-mur, — We' for B; and 'We mur - mur, — We mur-mur, —' for B2. The piano part has a treble clef staff with chords and a bass clef staff with a continuous eighth-note accompaniment. Dynamic markings include *(mf)* and *(mp)*. Measure numbers 34 and 35 are indicated at the top. A '2' above the final notes of the vocal parts indicates a second ending. The piano part has 'Lea.' markings below the bass staff.

36 (mf) 37 38

S notes as these?—

A notes as these?—

T (mp) We mur-mur,— We mur-mur,—

T2 (mp) We mur-mur,— We mur-mur,—

B (mp) mur-mur,— We mur-mur,—

B2 (mp) We mur-mur,— We mur-mur,—

Pno. (mf) (mp)

8

**Adagio tranquillo**  $\text{♩} = 44$

39 *mp* 40 41 42

S  
But an - gels, lean - ing from the gold - en seat, Are not so mind - ed; — their

A  
But an - gels, lean - ing from the gold - en seat, Are not so mind - ed; — their

T  
But an - gels, — lean - ing from the gold - en seat, Are not so mind - ed; — their

B  
But an - gels, lean - ing from the gold - en seat, Are not so mind - ed; — their

**Adagio tranquillo**  $\text{♩} = 44$

Pno.

\*

div. as written ———— *cresc. poco a poco* 43 44 45 *f* **ff**

S  
fine ear — hath won The is - sue of com - plet - ed ca - den - ces, — And,

A  
fine ear — hath won The is - sue of com - plet - ed ca - den - ces, — And,

T  
fine — ear — hath won The is - sue of com - plet - ed ca - den - ces, — And,

B  
fine ear — hath won The is - sue of com - plet - ed ca - den - ces, — And,

Pno.

46 *mp* *subito* 47 *p* < > 48 *mp* *subito* 49 *p* < > *mp* div. as written -----

S  
smil - ing down the stars, they whis - per— Sweet. they whis - per—

A  
smil - ing down the stars, they whis - per— Sweet. they whis - per—

T  
smil - ing down the stars, they whis - per— Sweet. they whis - per—

B  
smil - ing down the stars, they whis - per— Sweet. they whis - per—

Pno.

50 *mf* 51 *mp* 52 *mp* 53 54 *p* 55

S  
Sweet. they whis - per— Sweet. Sweet. Sweet. Sweet. Sweet.

A  
Sweet. they whis - per— Sweet. Sweet. Sweet.

T  
Sweet. they whis - per— Sweet. Sweet. Sweet.

B  
Sweet. they whis - per— Sweet. Sweet. Sweet.

Pno.