

***Batter My Heart Three  
Person'd God***

*for SATB Choir (divisi)*

Music by  
**John Muehleisen**

Poem by  
**John Donne (1572–1631)**

*Commissioned by the Dale Warland Singers  
with major funding provided by the Jerome Foundation,  
and additional support from the Alice M. Ditson Fund  
of Columbia University*

**PERUSAL SCORE  
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Please contact composer to  
purchase copies.  
[www.johnmuehleisen.com](http://www.johnmuehleisen.com)  
[john@johnmuehleisen.com](mailto:john@johnmuehleisen.com)

from HOLY SONNETS.

XIV.

Batter my heart, three-person'd God ; for you  
As yet but knock ; breathe, shine, and seek to mend ;  
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend  
Your force, to break, blow, burn, and make me new.  
I, like an usurp'd town, to another due,  
Labour to admit you, but O, to no end.  
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,  
But is captived, and proves weak or untrue.  
Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved fain,  
But am betroth'd unto your enemy ;  
Divorce me, untie, or break that knot again,  
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,  
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,  
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

- *John Donne*

### **Program Notes**

This emotionally dramatic and deeply spiritual text by John Donne is one of the most intense and ecstatic expressions in English verse of the desire for God and of the spiritual struggle between allegiance to God and allegiance to His “enemie”; a concentrated portrait of spiritual warfare experienced by many who seek earnestly after their God. I was first introduced to this text by the composer John Eaton, one of my composition professors during my doctoral studies at Indiana University, and had been searching for nearly 15 years for an opportunity to set the text. A commission from the Dale Warland Singers provided the opportunity for which I had been waiting.

Donne’s poem is full of many rich images that lend themselves wonderfully to choral treatment. In this musical setting I sought to amplify the images in the text and, in particular, to capture the many movements toward and away from God that lend intense movement to the text. I resolved to resist the obvious text painting of the opening’s violent images in favor of establishing a restrained atmosphere of “excruciating beauty,” as the initial marking in the score indicates, and to allow the music to follow the ebb and flow of the text, culminating in a rapturous, ecstatic ascent to God that begins at the text, “Divorce me, ‘untie, or break...,” and that ends at the final words, “...except you ravish mee.” The music in this final section is based on a transformation of the opening section of the work. Thus, after a series of unfulfilled, interrupted attempts to reach out to God, the text and the music represent a breakthrough that ultimately reaches upward beyond the previous attempts, although not altogether fulfilled, yet filled with such momentum and hope that the ascent is somehow certain.

### **Performance Notes**

**SSA, SAA, TTB, and TBB divisi:** Unless otherwise indicated, when divisi parts appear in either the soprano or alto voices such that the women’s voices divide into a total of three parts (SSA or SAA), do not observe the divisi “literally”; rather, distribute the three parts evenly amongst all of the women’s voices. The same principle applies to similar divisi in the men’s voices. When the voices divide evenly, observe the divisi as notated (SSAA, TTBB).

John Muehleisen  
Lynnwood, WA  
April 2000

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john@johnmuehleisen.com

# Batter My Heart Three Person'd God

Commissioned by the Dale Warland Singers with major funding  
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John Donne

John Muehleisen  
(2000, rev. 2003)

With Excruciating Beauty  $\text{♩} = 54$

*pp sempre*

Soprano  
Bat - ter my heart, my heart, my heart,

Alto  
Bat - ter my heart, my heart Bat - ter

Tenor  
Bat - ter my heart, Bat - ter, Bat - ter,

Bass  
Bat - ter my heart, my heart,

Piano\*  
*pp sempre*

\* for rehearsal only

7

S  
three per - son'd God;

A  
my heart, three per - son'd God;

T  
Bat - ter, three per - son'd God;

B  
Bat - ter, three per - son'd God;

Pno

13 *p sempre*

S Bat - ter Bat - - - ter my heart, Bat - ter my

A *p sempre* Bat - ter my, my heart, Bat - ter my

T *p sempre* my heart, my heart, Bat - ter my

B *p sempre* my heart, Bat - ter my heart, Bat - ter my

Pno *p sempre*

19

S heart, three per - son'd God;

A heart, three per - son'd God;

T heart, three per - son'd God;

B heart, three per - son'd God;

Pno

**Faster** ♩ = 66

S  
three per - son'd God;

A  
three per - son'd God;

T  
*mf* Bat - ter my heart, *mp* God;

B  
*mf* Bat - ter my heart, *mp* Bat - - ter, three per - son'd God;

Pno  
*mf* *mp*

**Faster** ♩ = 66

S  
*mf* Bat - ter my heart, *f* three per - son'd God; *accel.* *p subito*

A  
*mf* Bat - ter my heart, *f* three per - son'd God; *p subito*

T  
*mf* Bat - ter my heart, *f* three per - son'd God; *p subito*

B  
*mf* Bat - - - ter my heart *f* three per - son'd God; *p subito*

Pno  
*mf* *f* *accel.* *p subito*

(*accel.*) -----

*cresc. poco a poco*

S *ff*

A *ff*

T *ff*

B *ff*

Pno *cresc. poco a poco* *ff*

**Ecstatically** ♩ = 72

39 *ff* >

S Bat - - - ter my heart, three per - son'd God;

A Bat - - - ter my heart, three per - son'd God;

T Bat - - - ter my heart, three per - son'd God;

B Bat - - - ter my heart, three per - son'd God;

**Ecstatically** ♩ = 72

39 *ff* >

Pno

43 *p dolce* *pp* *f* *p*

S for, you As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to

A for, you As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to

T for, you As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to

B As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, seeke to

Pno *p dolce* *pp* *f* *p*

48 *ff*

S mend, a - rise and stand, o'er -

A mend, a - rise and stand, o'er -

T mend, That I may rise, o'er -

B mend, That I may rise, o'er -

Pno *ff* L. H.

53

S  
throw mee, 'and bend Your force, to breake,

A  
throw mee, 'and bend Your force, to breake,

T  
throw mee, 'and bend Your force, to breake,

B  
throw mee, 'and bend Your force, to breake,

Pno

*mf*

57

S  
blowe, burn, and make me new.

A  
blowe, burn, and make me new.

T  
blowe, burn, and make me new.

B  
blowe, burn, and make me new.

Pno

*f* *p subito* *rit.* *mf* *p*



Aggressively ♩ = 94

S  
La-bour, La -

A  
La-bour, La -

T  
I, like an u-surpt towne, to' an - o-ther due, La-bour, La -

B  
I, like an u-surpt towne, to' an - o-ther due, La-bour, La -

Pno

Aggressively ♩ = 94

S  
bour to' ad - mit, to' ad - mit you, to' ad - mit you, but

A  
bour to' ad - mit, to' ad - mit you, to' ad - mit you, but

T  
bour to' ad - mit, to' ad - mit you, to' ad - mit you, but

B  
bour to' ad - mit, to' ad - mit you, to' ad - mit you, but

Pno

Slower  $\bullet = 84$  *molto rit.* *ff* *mf* Aggressively  $\bullet = 94$

S Oh, \_\_\_\_\_ to no end,

A Oh \_\_\_\_\_

T Oh! \_\_\_\_\_ Rea - son, Rea - son your vice - roy in

B Oh! \_\_\_\_\_ Rea - son, Rea - son your vice - roy in

Pno

76 *f*

S \_\_\_\_\_ should de - fend,

A \_\_\_\_\_ should de - fend,

T mee, mee should de - fend, should de - fend,

B mee, mee should de - fend, should de - fend,

Pno

80

S *ff* mee should de - fend, but is

A *ff* mee should de - fend, but - is

T *ff* mee should de - fend, but is

B *ff* mee should de - fend, but is

Pno *ff*

Slower  $\text{♩} = 54$  *ff* gradually losing energy *mf* decresc. poco a poco *rit.* -----

85

S cap-tiv'd, and proves weake or un - true.

A cap-tiv'd, weake or un - true.

T cap-tiv'd, or un - true.

B cap-tiv'd, un - true.

Pno *f* gradually losing energy *mf* decresc. poco a poco *p*

Slower  $\text{♩} = 54$  *f* gradually losing energy *mf* decresc. poco a poco *rit.* -----

85

Pno *f* gradually losing energy *mf* decresc. poco a poco *p*

92 GP **Very Slowly**  $\text{♩} = 64$   
*p* tenderly *molto cresc. poco a poco*

S  
 Yet deare - ly' I love you, — 'and would be

A  
 Yet deare - ly' I love you, — 'and would be

T  
 Yet deare - ly' I love you, — 'and would be

B  
 Yet deare - ly' I love you, — 'and would be

Pno  
 92 GP **Very Slowly**  $\text{♩} = 64$   
*p* tenderly *molto cresc. poco a poco*

97 *ff*

S  
 lov - ed faine, But am be - troth'd

A  
 lov - ed faine, But am be - troth'd

T  
 lov - ed faine, But am be - troth'd

B  
 lov - ed faine, But am be - troth'd

Pno  
 97 *ff*

102

S un - to your en - e - mie: *mp*

A un - to your en - e - mie: *mf*

T un - to your en - e - mie: *mf*

B un - to your en - e - mie: *mp*

Pno

**With Growing Intensity** ♩ = 64

107

S 'un - tie, or break that knot a - gaine, *p* *mp* *p*

A 'un - tie, or break that knot a - gaine, *p* *mp* *p*

T Di - vorce mee, or break that knot a - gaine, *p* *mp* *p*

B Di - vorce mee, or break that knot a - gaine, *p* *mp* *p*

Melody *mp* *mf* *p*

**With Growing Intensity** ♩ = 64

107

Pno *p* *p*

113

*f*

S Take mee to you, \_\_\_\_\_ for I Ex - cept you' en -

*mf* *f*

A Take mee to you, im - pris-on mee, \_\_\_\_\_ for I Ex - cept you' en -

*mf* *f*

T Take mee to you, im - pris-on mee, \_\_\_\_\_ for I Ex - cept you' en -

*mf* *f*

B Take mee to you, im - pris-on mee, \_\_\_\_\_ for I Ex - cept you' en -

Pno

113

113

**Ecstatically**  $\bullet = 72$

Melody

118

S thrall mee, nev - er shall be free, Ex - cept you' en - thrall mee,

A thrall mee, nev - er shall be free, Ex - cept you' en - thrall mee,

T thrall mee, shall be free, Ex - cept you' en - thrall mee,

B thrall mee, shall be free Ex - cept you' en - thrall mee,

Pno

118

118

123 *ff*

S  
Nev - er be free, \_\_\_\_\_ Nor - ev - er chast, ex -

A  
(Bat - ter my heart), \_\_\_\_\_ Nor ev - er chast, ex -

T  
(Bat - ter my heart), \_\_\_\_\_ Nor ev - er chast, ex -

B  
*ff*  
Nev - er be free, \_\_\_\_\_ Nor ev - er chast, ex -

Pno  
123 *ff*

128

S  
cept you rav - ish mee. \_\_\_\_\_ Rav - - - - ish, \_\_\_\_\_ rav - ish mee, \_\_\_\_\_

A  
cept you rav - ish mee. \_\_\_\_\_ Rav - - - - ish, \_\_\_\_\_ rav - ish mee, \_\_\_\_\_

T  
cept you rav - ish mee. \_\_\_\_\_ Rav - - - - ish, \_\_\_\_\_ rav - ish mee, \_\_\_\_\_

B  
cept you rav - ish mee. \_\_\_\_\_ Rav - - - - ish, \_\_\_\_\_ rav - ish mee, \_\_\_\_\_

Pno  
128

133

*accel.*-----  
*mp subito* *cresc. poco a poco*

S  
 three per - son'd God!

A  
 three per - son'd God!

T  
 three per - son'd God!

B  
 three per - son'd God!

Pno  
 133  
*mp subito* *cresc. poco a poco*

*molto rit.*-----

138

S  
*ff*

A  
*ff*

T  
*ff*

B  
*ff*

Pno  
 138  
*molto rit.*-----  
*ff*



Slower  $\text{♩} = 72$  *molto rit.* *fff*

S  
 ex - cept you rav - ish mee, three per - - son'd God! \_\_\_\_\_

A  
 ex - cept you rav - ish mee, three per - - son'd God! \_\_\_\_\_

T  
 ex - cept you rav - ish mee, three per - - son'd God! \_\_\_\_\_

B  
 ex - cept you rav - ish mee, three per - - don'd God! \_\_\_\_\_

Pno  
 Slower  $\text{♩} = 72$  *molto rit.* *fff*

Lynnwood, WA  
 April 2000  
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