

MUSIC BY GREGG SMITH

BEWARE OF THE SOLDIER

Rosalind Rees, soprano, Douglas Perry, tenor

Charles Greenwell, bass, Chuck Garretson, soprano

Texas Boys Choir; George Bragg, conductor

Columbia University Men's Glee Club

Orchestral ensemble conducted by Gregg Smith

BEWARE OF THE SOLDIER was written for George Bragg and the Texas Boys Choir. It was first performed by the Choir in Fort Worth, May of 1969. It was during this period that campus rioting was at an apex and emotions over the Vietnam War were running at their highest. Although the work could be labeled as “anti-war,” the composition is intended more as a reflection of two aspects of mankind — childhood and innocence (as exemplified by those wonderful music-making boys) and “manhood” and the warrior complex (the male chorus). There is a third important element which focuses the above toward the futility of war — that of the elegies (sung by a solo voice).

I do not wish to espouse politics either in writing or in some way musically (and it is extremely questionable whether music can be really political) except to mention that one of the (many) horrific aspects of man's war-history is the use of many devices to justify war-making, even, astonishingly, religion. The most devastating commentary on this malaise is the *War Prayer* of Mark Twain — a most horrifying satire. Twain himself decided against publishing his poem while he lived — “I have told the whole truth in that, and only dead men can tell the truth in this world.” But men in all ages have cried out against the folly of war and this work (I am happy to note) draws its poetry from many sources in many periods ranging from Roman times (Tibullus) through St. Francis to 19th century authors Twain, Tolstoy and Hardy. The question of war, of armies, of military thinking, is not one of just our time but has concerned men in the same way through all ages.

For me, personally, I would like to think of BEWARE OF THE SOLDIER as a religious composition. The drama is hopefully found in the juxtaposition of the various elements—SONGS OF INNOCENCE, SONGS OF WAR, and the ELEGIES. The SONGS OF INNOCENCE are simple and tuneful — very tonal, non-intellectual — a satisfaction of this composer's urge to write relatively uncomplicated music. The SONGS OF WAR are in direct contrast — more dissonant and harsh. The ELEGIES are interwoven with a loose 12-tone structure — in my mind 12-tone music seems to have an overall melancholy to it.

Whatever messages are read into the work come primarily from the poetry, of course. My own are interjected through the choices, and, most important, the positioning of the texts. At first, the WAR SONGS are confident and urgent but then the attitude becomes modified as BEWARE continues (the tenor solos in WAR IS KIND, the subsiding final lines in WAR PRAYER and the whole of MAN AND ANGEL). The climax of the work is in the final male chorus — the most single important line being “Tall grass now is their monument.” How true that wars and heroes are soon forgotten — the one eternal gift we have is the renewing of life embodied in the young.

Finally I would point out that accompanying *L'Homme Armé* in the Epilogue are the same thoughts as the Haiku (now Tibullus) — “but rust lays hold of the grim weapons of the rough soldier in the dark.” It is only left for the words of St. Francis to close: “Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.” This is a plea and the same benediction of Twain that bitterly chides the *War Prayer* now can be said in honesty and true love.

— Gregg Smith

ABOUT GREGG SMITH

GREGG SMITH (b. Chicago, 1931) and his Gregg Smith Singers have been an important and pervasive force in American choral music over the last 15 years. Founded as a semi-professional group in Southern California in 1955, the Gregg Smith Singers quickly rose to national and international fame as a unique professional ensemble and were written up in Time Magazine for their performances of contemporary music ("Best in America").

Gregg Smith attended UCLA as a composition major, receiving his B.A. and M.A. in composition under Lukas Foss. One private teacher, Leonard Stein, a disciple of Schönberg, steeped the young composer in the classics as training ground for compositional study. It wasn't until he was a graduate student that he got caught up in the choral field and joined the UCLA madrigal chorus. His choral mentor, Ray Moreman, propelled him into conducting both as an assistant and soon after as the director of an all-Japanese Methodist choir in West Los Angeles. Gregg Smith found himself composing numerous church works for the choir. His subsequent compositional output includes more than 25 large works for chorus, hundreds of smaller choral pieces and arrangements, about 50 songs, 2 chamber operas, a large work for band, 2 piano sonatas, a harp sonata, and several chamber orchestral works. His music is published exclusively in a GREGG SMITH SERIES by G. Schirmer of New York. Gregg Smith lives in New York City and is choral director at both Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore and Columbia University in New York City.

The TEXAS BOYS CHOIR is widely recognized as the finest organization of its kind. It was created in 1947 by George Bragg in Denton, Texas, and has concertized and recorded internationally. Igor Stravinsky admired the choir intensely, and called its members "my boys."

The COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY MEN'S GLEE CLUB is probably the oldest continuing men's chorus in the U.S.A. In 1973 it celebrated its centenary with a tour of Europe.

ROSALIND REES, Mrs. Gregg Smith in private life, is a soloist in New York concerts and recordings. She is soloist in Robert Craft's new orchestral version of Stravinsky's *Les Noces* as well as Gregg Smith recordings. She is a member of the New York Vocal Arts Quartet and performs early music with the New York Kantorei Consort.

DOUGLAS PERRY and CHARLES GREENWELL are professional soloists with the Gregg Smith Singers. Perry is a member of the Sante Fe Opera Company and Greenwell divides his time between singing and orchestral conducting.

CHUCK GARRETSON is one of a long line of talented boy sopranos to grace the ranks of the Texas Boys Choir. Like many of his fellows, he is an outstanding student as well as performer.

This recording was made possible by a grant from the Ford Foundation. Produced by Gregg Smith and Carter Harman

(original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)

Text for "BEWARE OF THE SOLDIER"

Elegy Prelude (*Soprano and String Quartet*)

The souls of the slain, a dim discerned train of sprites without mold; frameless souls none might touch or might hold. I knew them for the souls of the felled, on earth's netherbord, under Capricorn, whither they'd warred. And I heard in my awe and gave heedfulness with breathings inheld. Then it seemed there appeared from the north ward a senior soul flame of the like filmy hue. And he met them and spake: "Is it you, O my men?"

Said they, "Aye! We bear homeward and hearthward to feast on our fame."

"I've flown there before you" he said. "Your households are well, but your kin linger less on your glory and war-mightiness than on dearer things."

"Dearer!" cried they then — "Of what do they tell?"

Prologue (*Men and Boys*)

Men:

L'homme armé doit on douter
(Beware of the Soldier)
On a fait partout crier
(he brings evil to all)
Que chacun se viengú armer
(You should arm yourself)
D'un haubregon de fer.
(with irons against him)

Boys:

Quis fuit horrendos primus
(Who was he who first discovered)
Qui protulit enses,
(the horrid sword)
quam ferus at vere fereus ille fuit
(How savage and truly made of iron he was.)
Tom caedes hominum generi turn proelie nata
(Then bloodshed and battles were born into the human race.)
Tum brevior dirge mortis aperta via est.
(Then a shorter way was opened for fearful death.)

Elegy Interlude (*Soprano and String Quartet*)

"Of what do they tell?"

"Some mothers muse sadly, and murmur your doings as boys; recall the quaint ways of your babyhood's innocent joys."

Songs of Innocence — "Infant Joy" (*Boys Choir*)

I have no name. I am but two days old. What shall I call thee?

I happy am, joy is my name.

Sweet joy befall thee, pretty boy,

Sweet joy but two days old.

Sweet joy I call thee. Thou dost smile. I sing the while, sweet joy befall thee.

Songs of War — "War is Sacred" (*Bass Solo and Man's Choir*)

War is sacred — a divine institution.

It fosters every lofty and noble sentiment in the human heart.

Solo: A soldier is Christ's warrior and as such he should regard himself, and so he should behave.

War is sacred...

Solo: Always attack, never defend; only he is beaten who is afraid. If your bayonet breaks, strike with the stock; if the stock breaks, hit with your fists; if your fists are hurt, bite with your teeth. Only he wins who fights desperately to the death.

War is sacred...

Solo: Remember, God defends the brave. Where the bold one will get through, God will trip up the timid one. For the good soldier there are no flanks, nor rear, but all is front where the foe is.

War is sacred...

Solo: Pray to God. From him is the victory. God leads you. He's your general. Obedience! Discipline! Cleanliness! Health! Glory! Glory! Glory!

Elegy Interlude (*Soprano and String Quartet*)

"Now tell us — how hold out our sweethearts, sworn loyal as doves?"

"Many mourn. Many think it is not unattractive to prink them in sables for heroes. Some fickle and fleet hearts have found them new loves."

Songs of Innocence — "The Grasshopper and Cricket" (*Boys Choir*)

When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,
and hide in the cooling trees,
A voice will run from hedge to hedge, about the
new-mown mead.

That is the grasshopper, hopper, hopper....
He takes the lead in summer luxuries;
He has never done with his delights,
for when tired out with sun he rests at ease
beneath some pleasant weed.

On a lone winter evening, when the frost
has wrought

A silence from the stove, there shrilts the
cricket's song.

In warmth increasing ever, and seems to one,
in drowsiness half lost

The grasshopper, hopper... among some
grassy hills.

Songs of War — "War is Kind" (*Tenor Solo and Men's Choir*)

Hoarse, booming drums of the regiment,
Little souls who thirst for fight,
There men were born to drill and die.
The unexplained glory flies above them,
Great is the battle god. Great!
And his kingdom, a field where a thousand corpses lie.

Solo: Do not weep babe, for war is kind.
Because your lather tumbled in the yellow trenches,
Raged at his breast, gulped and died.
Do not weep — war is kind.

Elegy Interlude (*Soprano and String Quartet*)

"And our wives?" quoth another resignedly; "Dwell they on our deeds?"

"Deeds of home that live yet, fresh as new. Deeds of fondness or fret; ancient words, kindly expressed or unkindly. These, these have their deeds."

(*War is Kind*)

Swift, blazing flag of the regiment!
Eagle with crest of red and gold.
These men were born to drill and die.
Point for them the virtue of slaughter,
Make plain for them the excellence of killing,
And a field where a thousand corpses lie.

Solo: Do not weep dear — for war is kind.

Your mother whose heart hung humble as a button on the bright, splendid shroud of your son,
Do not weep — war is kind.

Songs of Innocence — "Blossom" (*Boys Choir*)

Songs of War — "A War Prayer" (*Men's Choir*)

Merry, merry sparrow under leaves so green,
A happy blossom sees you, swift as an arrow,
Seek your cradle narrow near my bosom.

(*Men: O Lord, our God.*)

Pretty, pretty robin, under leaves so green,

(*O Lord, our God*)

A happy blossom hears you sobbing

(*O Lord, our God*)

Pretty, pretty robin, near my bosom.

Men: Help us to tear their soldiers to shreds with our shells.

Help us to lay waste their humble homes with a hurricane of fire.

Help us to turn their widows out roofless with their little children.

For our sakes who adore thee Lord, blast their hopes, blight their lives, make heavy their steps.

We ask it in the spirit of love of him who is the source of love. Amen.

Elegy Interlude (*Soprano and String Quartet*)

A father broods:

"Would I had set him to some humble trade,
And so slacked his high fire and his passionate
martial desire;
And told him no stories, to woo him and whet him,
To this dire crusade."

Songs of Innocence "Maying" (*Boys Choir*)

Now is the month of maying when merry lath are playing,
Each with his bonny lass, upon the greeny grass,
Fa, la, la, la
The spring clad all in gladness doth laugh at winter's sadness,
And to the bagpipes sound the nymphs tread out their ground,

Fa, la, la, la

Fie, Then why sit we, sit we musing, while youth's delight refusing,
Say dainty nymphs and speak, shall we now play barley break?
The spring clad all in

Elegy Interlude (*Soprano and String Quartet*)

Alas! Then it seems that our glory weighs less in their thought
Than our old homely acts and the long ago common place facts of our lives,
Held by us as scarce part of our story, and rated as nought.

Songs of War — "The Man and the Angel" (*Men's Choir*)

"It was wrong to do this" said the angel, "You should live like a flower.
Holding malice like the puppies, waging war like the lambkins."
"Not so" quoth the man, who had no fear of spirits.
"It is only wrong for angels, who can live like the flowers,
Holding malice like the puppies, waging war like the lambkins."

Songs of Innocence — "Little Lamb" (*Boys Choir*)

Little lamb, who made thee, dost thou know who made thee,
Gave thee life and bid thee feed by the streams o'er the mead,
Gave thee clothing of delight, softest clothing wooly bright,
Gave thee such a tender voice, you made the vales rejoice, all rejoice
Little lamb, who made thee, dost thou know who made thee?

Little lamb, I'll tell thee. He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a lamb, he is meek and mild, he became a child.
I a child and thou a lamb. We are called by his name.
Little lamb, God bless thee.

Songs of War — "Here, where a thousand captains" (*Men's Choir*)

Here, where a thousand captains
Swore grand conquest,
Tall grass now is their monument.

Epilogue (*Men and Boys*)

Men: L'homme armé doit on douter
(Beware of the soldier)
On a fait pertout crier
(he brings evil to all)
Que chacun se viengu' armer
(You should arm yourself)
D'un haubregon de far.
(with irons against him.)

Boys: Interea pax arva colat.
(Let peace meanwhile cultivate our fields)
Pax candida primum
(Fair peace first)
Duxit araturos sub juga curva boves
(led the oxen to plough the fields under the curved yoke)

Pax aluit vites at sucos condidit uvae,
(Peace nourished the vines and stored the grape-juice)
Funderet ut nato testa paterna merum;
(So that wine might pour from the father's pitcher into the son's)
Pace bidens vomerque nitent,
(In time of peace the hoe and the ploughshare are resplendent,
at tristia duri
(but rust lays hold of)
militia in tenebris occupat arma situs.
(the grim weapons of the rough soldier in the dark,)

Prayer (*Soprano and String Quartet*)

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.
Where there is injury, let me sow pardon,
Where there is doubt, faith,
Darkness, light.
Where there is sadness, joy.
We ask it in the spirit of love,
Of him who is the source of love.
Amen.

BEWARE OF THE SOLDIER

Elegy Prelude - "The Souls of the Slain" - (Thomas Hardy)
Prologue - "L'Homme arme" - (14th Century – Anon.) Men's Choir
"Against War" - (Latin from Tibullus) Boys Choir
Elegy Interlude - "The Souls of the Slain"
Songs of Innocence - "Infant Joy" - (William Blake)
Songs of War - "War is Sacred" - (Quoted from a speech by a Russian Army General in Tolstoy's 'On Civil Disobedience')
Elegy Interlude - "The Souls of the Slain"
Songs of Innocence - "The Grasshopper and Cricket" - (John Keats)
Songs of War - "War is Kind" - (Stephen Crane)
(with Elegy Interlude between verses I and II)
Songs of Innocence — "Blossom" — (William Blake)
Songs of War — "A War Prayer" — (Mark Twain)
Songs of Innocence — "Maying" (Elizabethan — Anon.)
Elegy Interlude — "The Souls of the Slain"
Songs of War — "The Man and the Angel" — (William Blake)
Songs of Innocence — "Little Lamb" — (William Blake)
Songs of War — "Here where a thousand captains swore great conquest" — (Haiku)
Epilogue — "L'Homme arme" (14th Century — Anon.) Men's Choir
"Against War" — (Latin from Tibullus) Boys Choir
Prayer — (from St. Francis and Mark Twain)