

ROBERT RIVAL
AGAIN...RIDING

for mixed choir (SSAATTBB)

(texts by Marjorie Pickthall)

2018

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Text: Marjorie Pickthall (1883-1922)
Duration: about 4 minutes
Divisi: SSAATTBB

Commissioned by Oras Chamber Choir (Thunder Bay, Ontario)
& Erik Johannes Riekkö, conductor

AGAIN

The Woodcarver's Wife (1922)

Just to live under green leaves and see them
Just to lie under low stars and watch them wane,
Just to sleep by a kind heart and know it loving
Again—

Just to wake on a sunny day and the wind blowing,
Just to walk on a bare road in a bright rain,—
These, O God, and the night, and the moon showing
Again—

RIDING

The Woodcarver's Wife (1922)

If I should live again,
Quick of sinew and vein
O God, let me be young,
With the honeycomb on my tongue,
All in a moment flung
With the dawn on a flowing plain,
Riding, riding, riding, riding
Between the sun and the rain.

If, having been, must be,
O God, let it be so,
Swift and supple and free
With a long journey to go,
And the clink of the curb and the blow
Of hooves, and the wind at my knee,
Riding, riding, riding, riding
Between the hills and the sea.

Program Note

Born in England, the writer Marjorie Pickthall (1883-1922) grew up in Toronto and spent her last years writing in a small cottage on Vancouver Island. Though widely celebrated during her lifetime, her reputation took a plunge, shot down by modernist critics who disapproved of her romantic leanings. I came across her collected poems quite by accident and was immediately enthralled by their supreme craft, attractive rhythm, clarity of expression, and concision—all lyrical qualities that invite musical setting. Two of these, “Again” and “Riding”, written late in her career and published posthumously, brim with enthusiasm for time spent in solitude in the great outdoors, a distinctly Canadian value with which I strongly identify. Moreover, the speaker in both appears to be dead—or, ironically, at least nearly so. In “Again”, she yearns for communion with nature; in “Riding”, to ride a horse swiftly “between the hills and the sea”. The poems, though unrelated, share not only a similar perspective—a desire to experience anew life’s wonders—but also vocabulary: “again”, “rain”, and “O God”. I have brought the pair into direct contact by joining them seamlessly, then reprising “Again”, varied, its melody now accompanied by the galloping “riding” motive, such harmonious merging of texts the unique domain of music.
—R.R.

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texts: Marjorie Pickthall

Briskly flowing ♩ = c. 104

p

S
A
T
B

6

S
A
T
B

12

S
A
T
B

Again...Riding

20

mp

S Just to walk on a bare road in a

A sun - ny day and the wind blow - ing, *f* in a

T *mp* blow - ing, *mp* blow, ___ blow, ___

B *mp* bright

25

f **holding back** **forward, nervously**

S bright rain, ___ These, O God, ___ and the night, and the moon

A bright rain, ___ These, O God, and the night, and the moon

T *f* bright ___ rain, These, O God, and the night, ___ and the moon ___

B ___ rain, These, O God, and the night, and the moon

31 **a tempo**

p

S show - ing ___ A - gain, ___ a - gain

A show - ing ___ A - gain, ___ a - gain

T *p* show - ing

B *f* show - ing If I should live a -