

NELL SHAW COHEN

It's a Long Way



SATB Choir

Duration: 2'15"

SKYLARK EDITION

*f*araway
nearby

NELL SHAW COHEN

It's a Long Way

2020

SATB Choir

Duration: 2'15"

Commissioned by Skylark Vocal Ensemble
Matthew Guard, Artistic Director

Cover: Detail from "Seascape" (1901), watercolor, William Trost Richards (1833–1905). Public domain.

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Performance Notes

Tenuti markings indicate a medium-weight accent with, where appropriate, a bell tone attack.

fp markings indicate a forceful bell tone.

Accent markings during a soft dynamic may be interpreted as one step up from the dynamic in which they occur (ex: soprano, m. 11, accents during *mp* become *mf*).

Program Note

William Stanley Braithwaite was a self-taught African American writer, editor, and critic, celebrated for his contributions to the development of 20th century American poetry. His poem "It's a Long Way," although published in 1904, speaks powerfully to me in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of us have had to put dreams on hold for an unknown length of time—delaying pivotal steps in our personal lives, careers, or education, awaiting the day we may be reunited with loved ones. In this moment of widespread uncertainty and personal yearning, we're also experiencing a powerful collective yearning for a just society to emerge from the crucible of current events. Braithwaite gives voice to a sentiment I've been holding onto these past months, in light of all of the above: "*It's work we must, and love we must, / And do the best we may, / And take the hope of dreams in trust / To keep us day by day.*" I've sought to honor Braithwaite's bittersweet words of hope and determination with a choral setting for all of us striving to safely arrive at our journeys' shore.

—Nell Shaw Cohen

Please visit nellshawcohen.com for:

- ◆ Composer biography and headshot,
- ◆ Recordings,
- ◆ Performance history,
- ◆ ...and more information about this work.

Contact the composer at nell@nellshawcohen.com

Text

It's a Long Way

It's a long way the sea-winds blow
 Over the sea-plains blue,—
But longer far has my heart to go
 Before its dreams come true.

It's work we must, and love we must,
 And do the best we may,
And take the hope of dreams in trust
 To keep us day by day.

It's a long way the sea-winds blow—
 But somewhere lies a shore—
Thus down the tide of Time shall flow
 My dreams forevermore.

From "Lyrics of Life and Love" (1904)
by William Stanley Braithwaite (1878-1962).

Commissioned by Skylark Vocal Ensemble

It's a Long Way

Text by William Stanley Braithwaite (1878-1962)

Nell Shaw Cohen (2020)

Tenderly (♩ = c. 70)

This musical system is for the first four vocal parts: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked 'Tenderly' with a quarter note equal to approximately 70 beats per minute. The lyrics are: 'It's a long way the sea - winds blow O - ver the sea - plains blue,—'. The music features dynamic markings of *pp* (pianissimo), *p* (piano), *mp* (mezzo-piano), and *pp* (pianissimo) with crescendo and decrescendo hairpins. A triplet of eighth notes is marked in the Soprano part.

Soprano
It's a long way the sea - winds blow O - ver the sea - plains blue,—

Alto
It's a long way the sea - winds blow O - ver the sea - plains blue,—

Tenor
It's a long way the sea - winds blow O - ver the sea - plains blue,—

Bass
It's a long way the sea - winds blow O - ver the sea - plains blue,—

This musical system continues the vocal parts from the first system, labeled S. (Soprano), A. (Alto), T. (Tenor), and B. (Bass). The key signature remains three sharps and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: 'But long - er far has my heart to go Be - fore its dreams come true.' The music continues with dynamic markings of *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *pp* (pianissimo) with hairpins. A triplet of eighth notes is marked in the Soprano part.

S.
But long - er far has my heart to go Be - fore its dreams come true.

A.
But long - er far has my heart to go Be - fore its dreams come true.

T.
But long - er far has my heart to go Be - fore its dreams come true.

B.
But long - er far has my heart to go Be - fore its dreams come true.

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It's a Long Way

A

10

p *mp* *mp*

S. It's work we must— And

p *mp* *p* *mp*

A. Work— And love we must— do the best we may, — And

p *mp*

T. Work— love— And do the best we may,—

p *mp*

B. Work— love— do — the best we may,—

B

15

p *mf* *fp* *p*

S. take the hope of dreams in trust To keep us day by day. It's work we must, And

p *mf* *fp*

A. take the hope of dreams in trust To keep us day by day. and love we must,—

p *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

T. hope— trust— It's work— must, and love— must, And

p *mp*

B. hope— trust— To keep us day by day— we must, love we must,—

21

S. *mf* *mp* *mf* *fp*
do the best we may,— And take the hope of dreams in trust To keep us

A. *mf* *mp* *mf* *fp*
best we may,— And take the hope of dreams in trust To keep us

T. *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *p*
do the best we may,— And take the hope of dreams in trust To

B. *p* *mf* *mp* *mf* *p*
do the best we may,— And take the hope of dreams in trust To

26

S. *p* *pp* **C** *mp*
day by day. It's a long way the sea - winds blow But

A. *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *mp*
day by day. It's a long way the sea - winds blow But

T. *mp* *pp* *p* *pp* *mp*
keep us day by day. It's a long way the sea - winds blow But

B. *pp* *mp*
keep us day by day. It's a long way the sea - winds blow But

32

S. *p* *pp* *p*
 some - where lies a shore— Thus down the tide of Time shall flow My

A. *p* *pp* *p*
 some - where lies a shore— Down the tide of Time shall flow My

T. *p* *pp* *p*
 some - where lies a shore— Thus down the tide of Time shall flow My

B. *p* *pp* *p*
 some - where— a shore— Down the tide of Time shall flow My

37

S. *mf* *mp* *p* *pp*
 dreams for - ev - er - more, My dreams for - ev - er - more.

A. *mf* *mp* *p* *pp*
 dreams for - ev - er - more, dreams for - ev - er - more.

T. *mf* *mp* *p* *pp*
 dreams for - ev - er - more, My dreams for - ev - er - more.

B. *mf* *mp* *p* *pp*
 dreams for - ev - er - more, dreams for - ev - er - more.

rit. poco a poco