### **NELL SHAW COHEN**

# It's a Long Way



SATB Choir

Duration: 2'15"

### SKYLARK EDITION



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2020

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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 <a href="mailto:nell@nellshawcohen.com">nell@nellshawcohen.com</a>

#### **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.

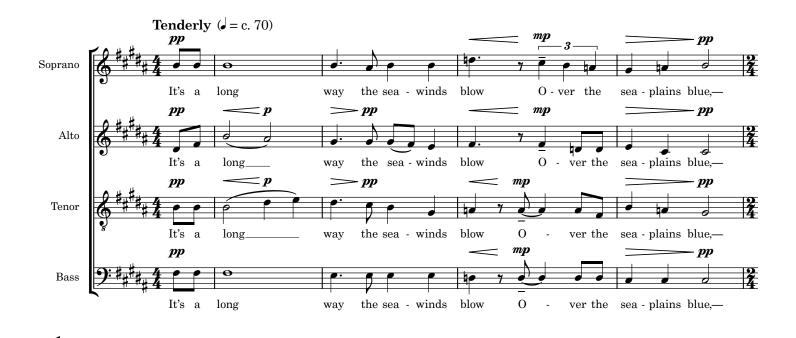
It's a long way the sea-winds blow—
But somewhere lies a shore—
Thus down the tide of Time shall flow
My dreams forevermore.

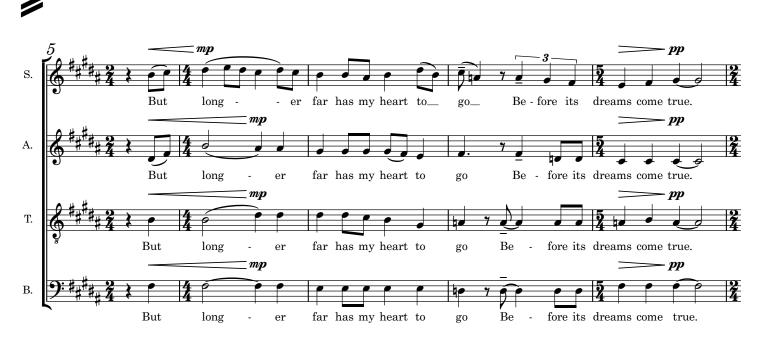
From "Lyrics of Life and Love" (1904) by William Stanley Braithwaite (1878–1962).

## It's a Long Way

Text by William Stanley Braithwaite (1878-1962)

Nell Shaw Cohen (2020)





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hope-

trust-



То

keep us day by day— we must,

love we must,-



day

day

by.

by

keep us\_\_\_

keep us\_

day.

pp

day.

It's a

It's a

long.

long

way the sea - winds blow

way the sea - winds blow

But

But

mp

