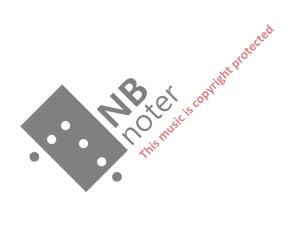
edvin østergaard

the nature of nature

for

mixed choir and soloist groups





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edvin østergaard 2014/2015

written for oslo voices and their conductor lars isdahl funded by det norske komponistfond

about the piece

This piece is based on writings by Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374); one of his poems from the grand cycle *Canzoniere* and excerpts from a letter written on April 26, 1335, after his descend from Mount Ventoux in Provence, South-France.

The intention of this piece is best fulfilled when performed in a combination with renaissance madrigals (also) using Petrarch poems. There is a huge amount of such madrigals, written by composers like Giovanni P. da Palestrina, Orlando di Lasso, Adrian Willaert, Luca Marenzio, Mateo Flecha and others.

Two of the movements in "The Nature of Nature" relate more or less explicitly to such madrigals. These are: *The heavy air* (related to di Lasso's madrigal: *O inuidia*) and *As long as to the sea* (related to Palestrina's madrigal *Mentre ch'al mar descenderanno*)

The movements in "The Nature of Nature" can be performed in any order and in combination with any number of additional madrigals.

the texts

The two text sources in this piece are:

1. Excerpts from a letter written on April 26, 1335

"I was [...] angry with myself that I should still be admiring earthly things who might long ago have learned from even the pagan philosophers that nothing is wonderful but the soul, which, when great itself, finds nothing great outside itself. Then, in truth, I was satisfied that I had seen enough of the mountain; I turned my inward eye noon myself, and from that time not a syllable fell from my lips until we reached the bottom again, [...] How many times [...] did I turn back that day, to glance at the summit of the mountain, which seemed scarcely a cubit high compared with the range of human contemplation? [...] If we are ready to endure so much sweat and labour in order that we may bring our bodies a little nearer heaven, how can a soul struggling toward God, up the steeps of human pride and human destiny, fear any cross or prison or sting of fortune?" (Petrarch, translated by J. H. Robinson, 1914)

2. Nr. 66, from Canzoniere

L'aere gravato, et l'importuna nebbia compressa intorno da rabbiosi vènti tosto conven che si converta in pioggia; et già son quasi di cristallo i fiumi, e 'n vece de l'erbetta per le valli non se ved'altro che pruine et ghiaccio.

Et io nel cor via piú freddo che ghiaccio ò di gravi pensier' tal una nebbia, qual si leva talor di queste valli, serrate incontra agli amorosi vènti, et circundate di stagnanti fiumi, quando cade dal ciel piú lenta pioggia.

In picciol tempo passa ogni gran pioggia, e 'l caldo fa sparir le nevi e 'l ghiaccio, di che vanno superbi in vista i fiumi; né mai nascose il ciel sí folta nebbia che sopragiunta dal furor d'i vènti non fugisse dai poggi et da le valli.

Ma, lasso, a me non val fiorir de valli, anzi piango al sereno et a la pioggia et a' gelati et a' soavi vènti: ch'allor fia un dí madonna senza 'l ghiaccio dentro, et di for senza l'usata nebbia, ch'i' vedrò secco il mare, e' laghi, e i fiumi.

Mentre ch'al mar descenderanno i fiumi et le fiere ameranno ombrose valli; fia dinanzi a' begli occhi quella nebbia che fa nascer d'i miei continua pioggia, et nel bel petto l'indurato ghiaccio che trâ del mio sí dolorosi vènti.

Ben debbo io perdonare a tutti vènti, per amor d'un che 'n mezzo di duo fiumi mi chiuse tra 'l bel verde e 'l dolce ghiaccio, tal ch'i' depinsi poi per mille valli l'ombra ov'io fui, ché né calor né pioggia né suon curava di spezzata nebbia.

Ma non fuggio già mai nebbia per vènti, come quel dí, né mai fiumi per pioggia, né ghiaccio quando 'l sole apre le valli. The heavy air, and the importunate fog Kept densely pressed around by furious winds Eventually must turn itself to rain; already nearly crystal are the rivers and in the place of grass throughout the valleys one see down there nothing but frost and ice.

And in my heart much colder, more than ice my thoughts are heavy in such a fog, the kind that sometimes rises from these valleys, closed all around against the loving winds and all surrounded by stagnating rivers when from the sky there falls the slowest rain.

In no time passes every heavy rain and warmth makes disappear the snows and ice which gives a proud appearance to the rivers; the sky was never hid by such thick fog that, meeting with the fury of the winds it did not flee from hills and from the valleys.

But there's no help for me in blooming valleys; I weep when it is clear and when it rains and in the freezing and the warming winds; the day my lady will not be like ice inside, and outside without constant fog, I'll see dried up the sea and lakes and rivers.

As long as to the sea descend the rivers and beasts continue loving shady valleys, before her lovely eyes there will be that fog that gives rise in my own to constant rain, and in her loving breast the hardened ice that draws out from mine such pain-filled winds.

I surely would put up with all the winds, for love of that one who between two rivers closed me between fair green and the sweet ice, so that I traced them, through a thousand valleys where I had been, her shade; not heat or rain concerned me nor did sound of shattered fog.

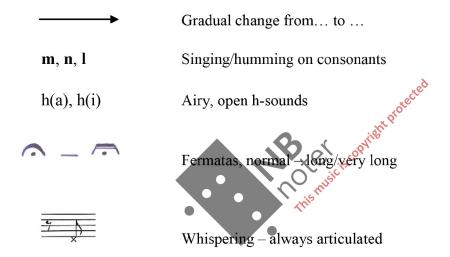
But never did the fog flee from the winds as on that day, nor rivers from the rain, nor ice, when sunlight opens up the valleys.

(translated by Mark Musa, 1996, used by courtesy of Indiana University Press. All rights reserved)

choir positions

The choir is encouraged to try out different positions in the five movements in order to obtain spatial and timbre effects. Moving in and between the movements might be tried out in order to achieve a smooth, continuous performance at the concert.

signs and symbols

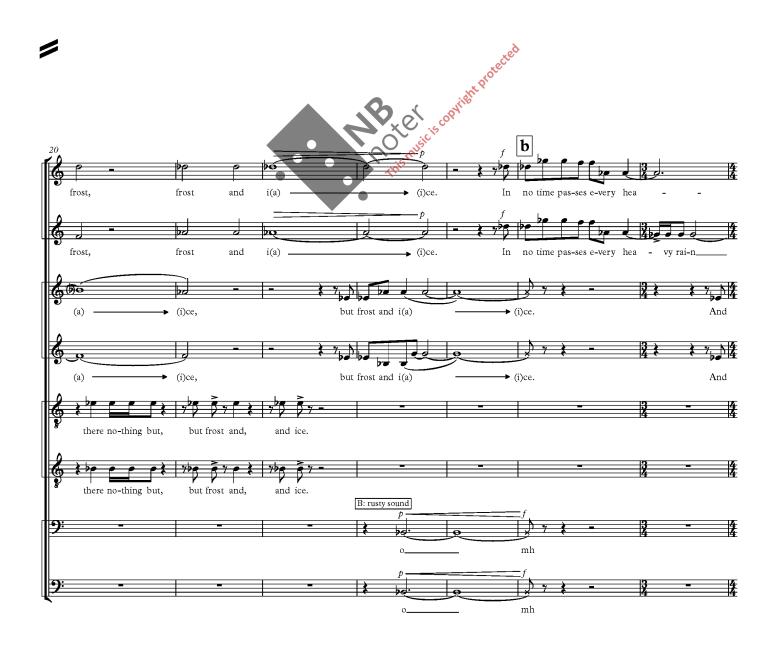


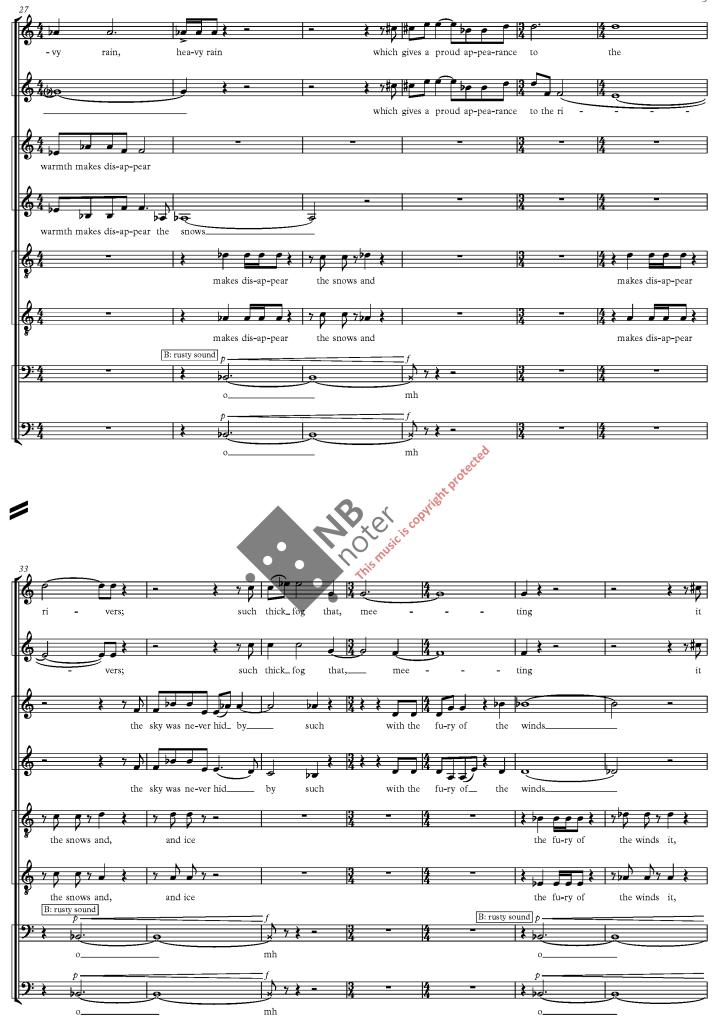
Note: The English texts should always be pronounced with a British accent. When not specified, sing without vibrato.

The heavy air



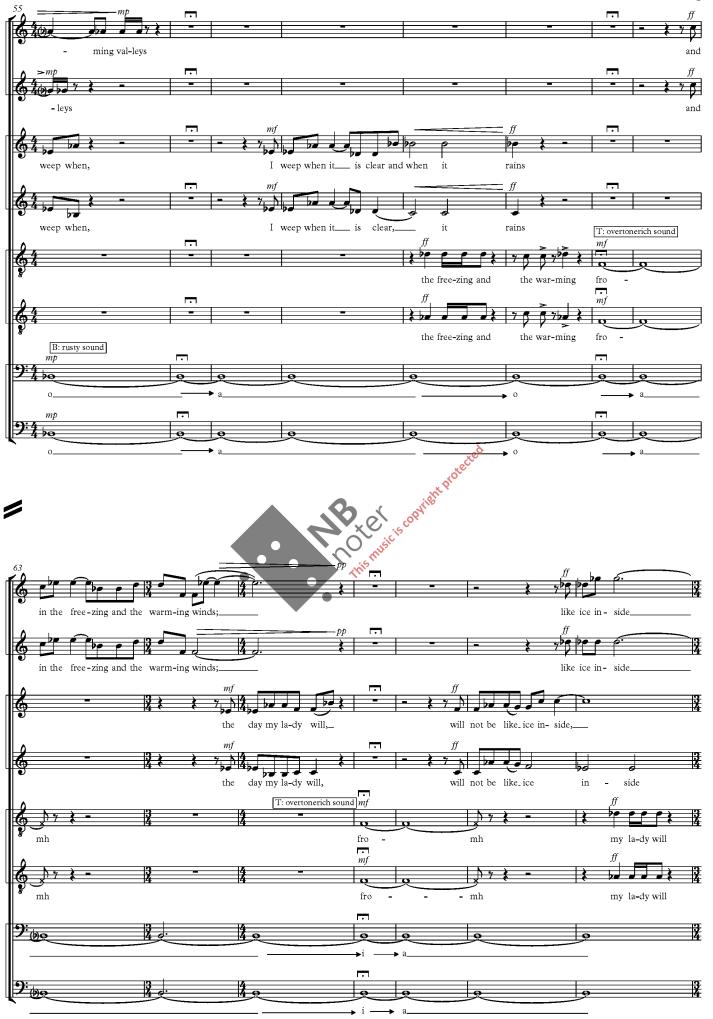




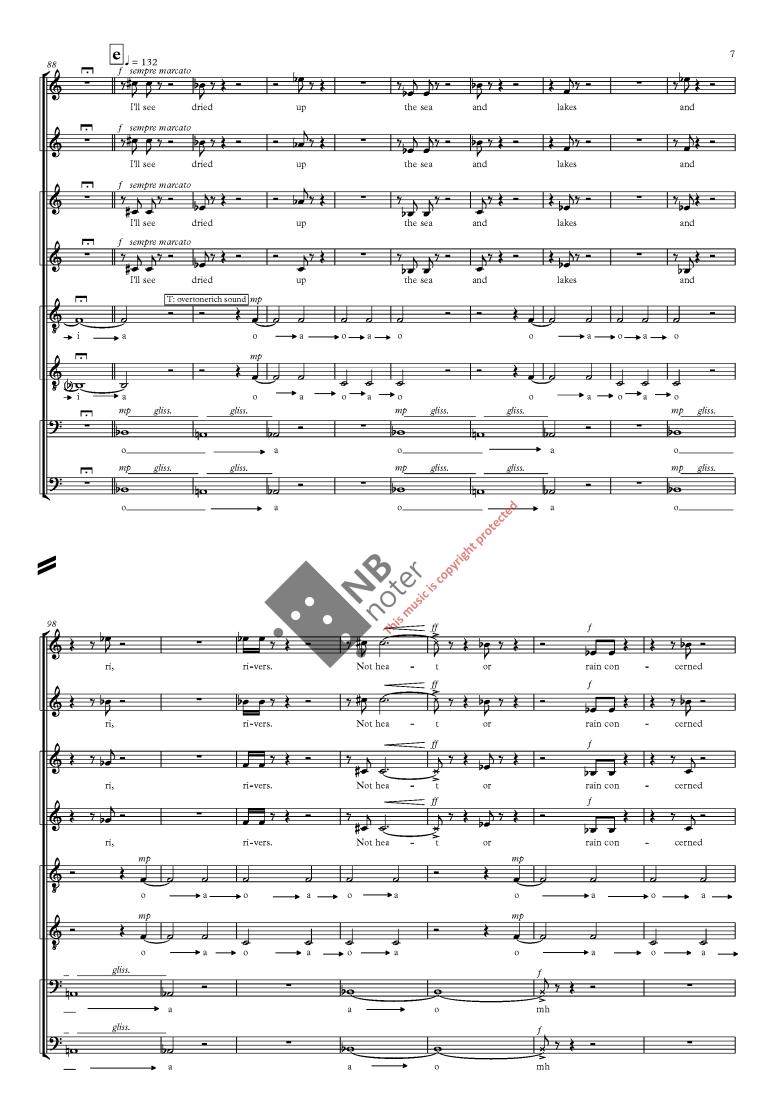






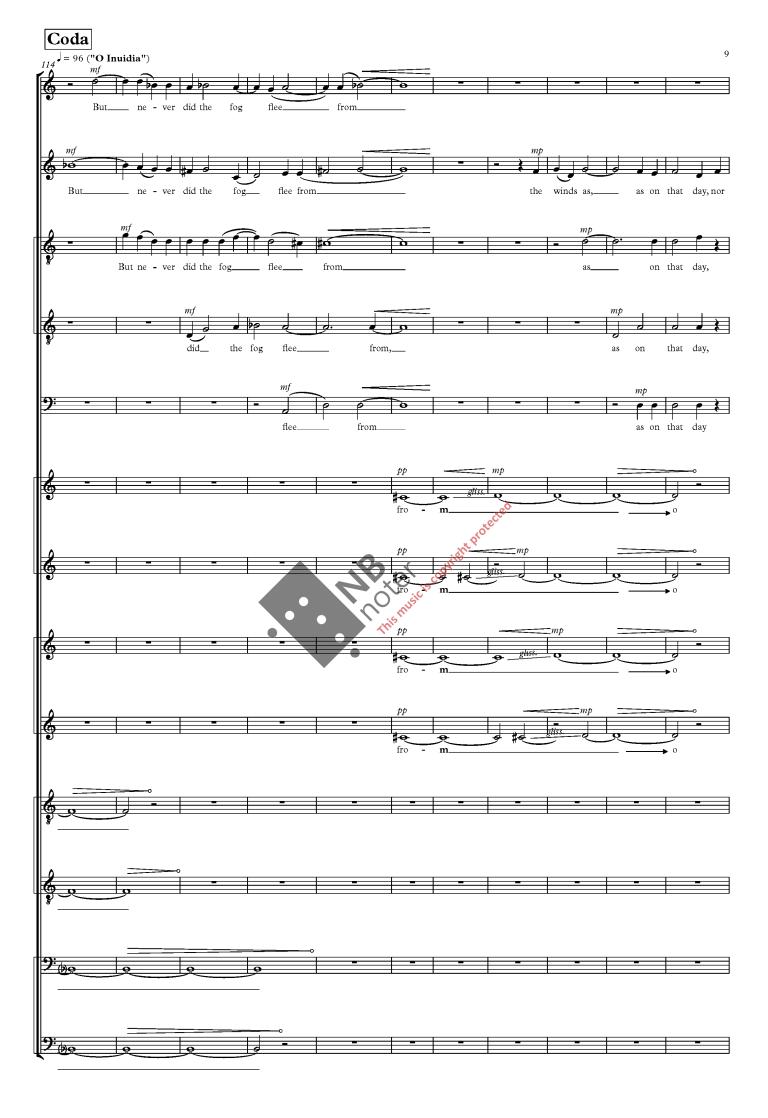


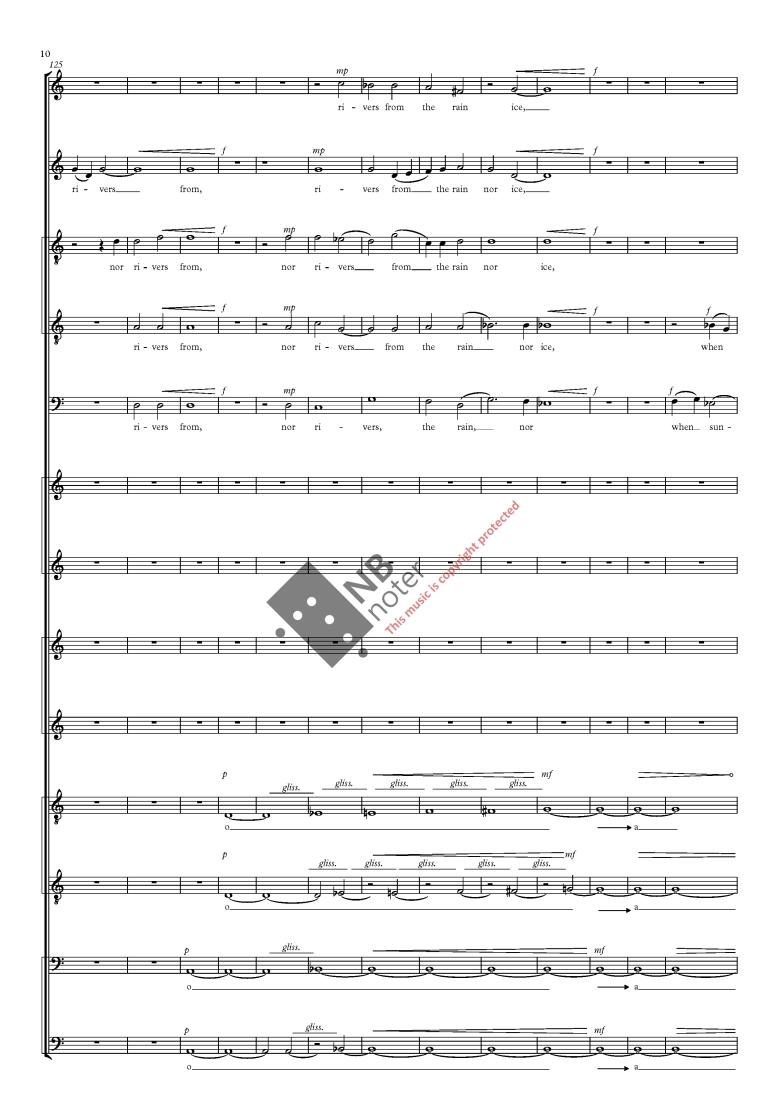




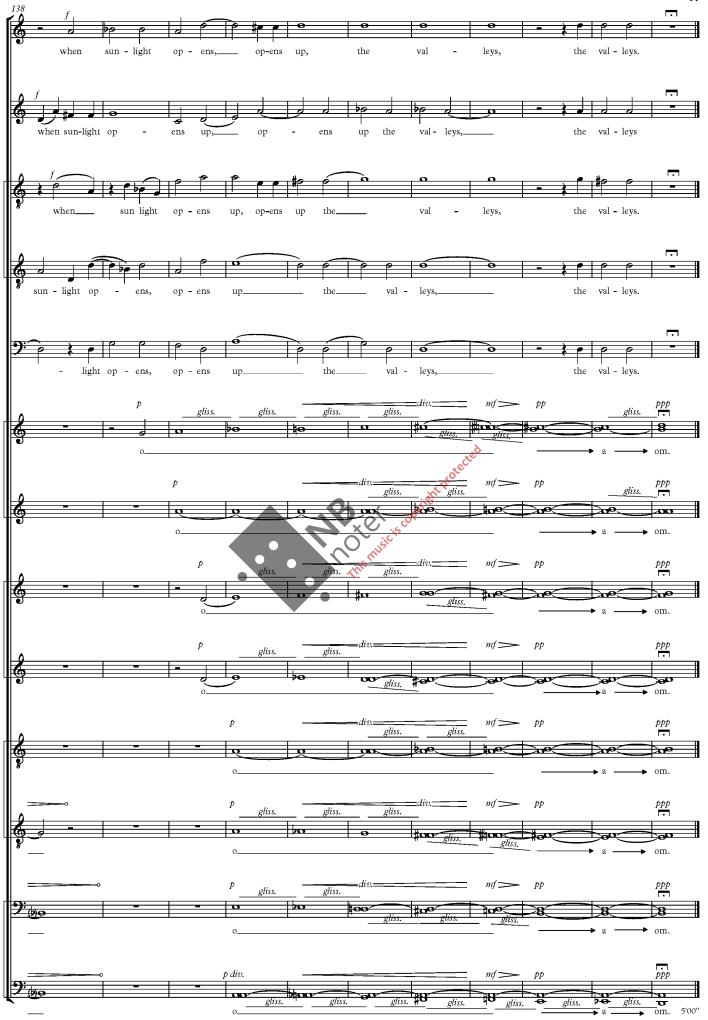


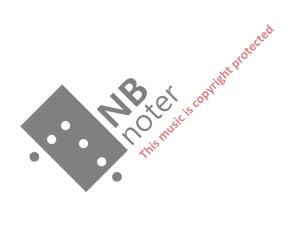
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As long as to the sea







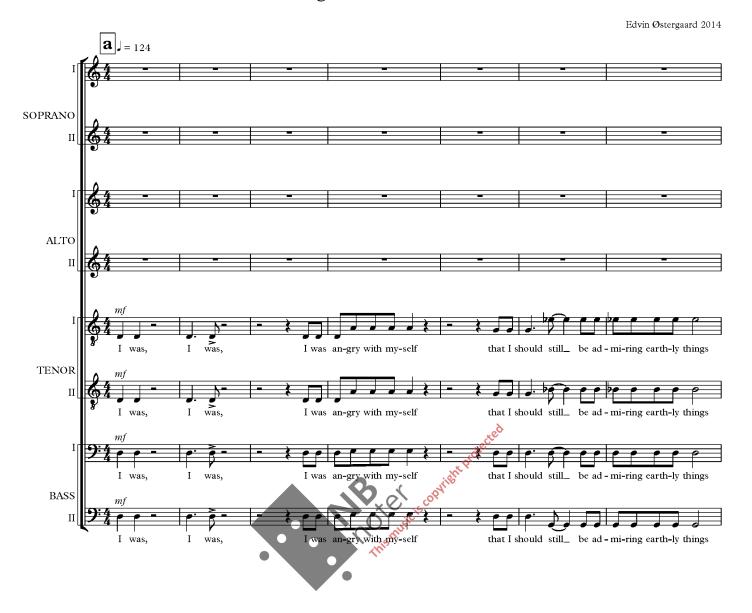


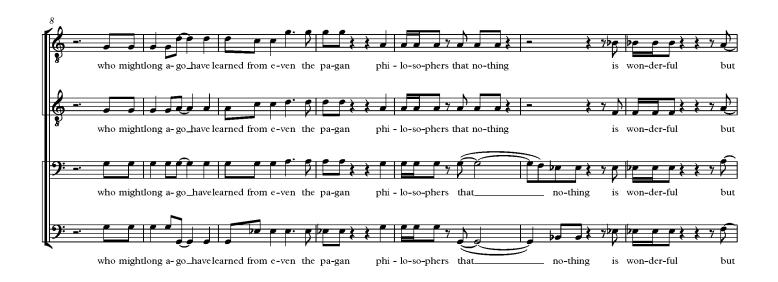






Enough of the mountain

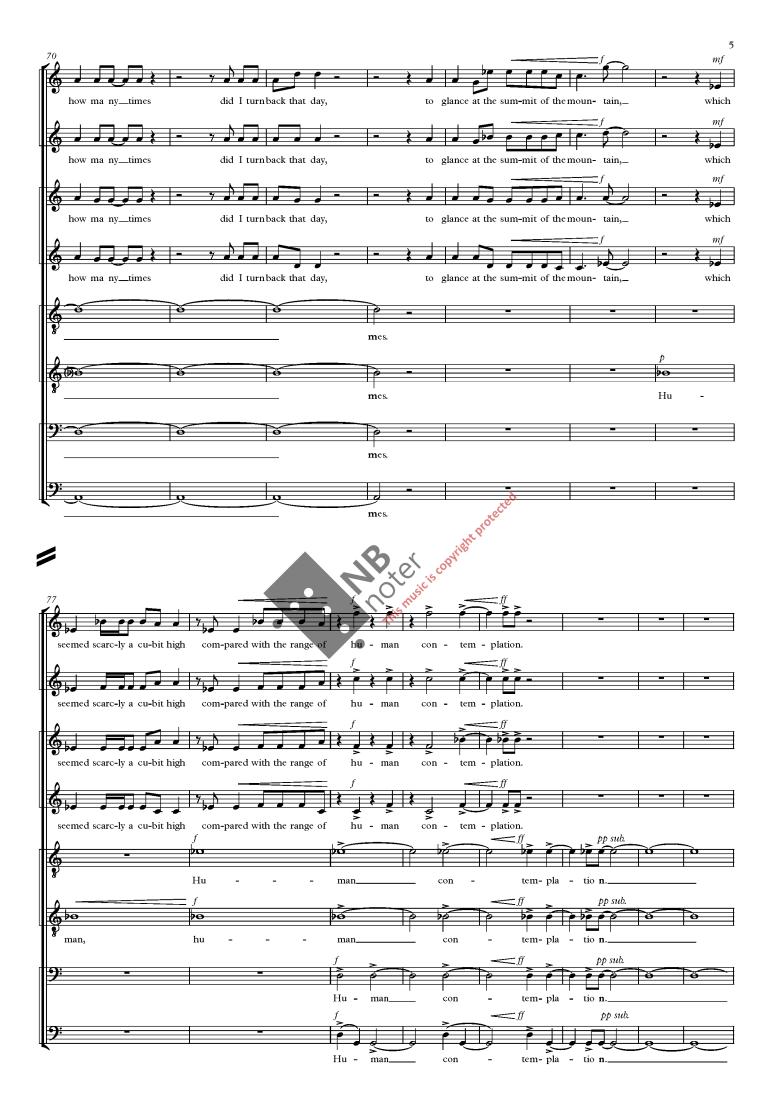






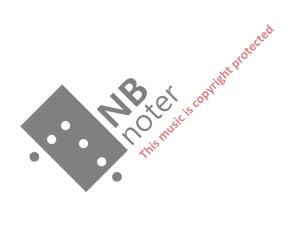












The slowest rain

















When sunlight opens up

with the period of Foucault's pendulum: 16,4 sec.





