

For the Henry Middle School Varsity Treble Choir for their performance at
the 2019 National Conference of the American Choral Directors Association; Amanda Ransom, conductor

Where the Light Begins

SSA and Piano

Text by
JAN RICHARDSON

Music by
SUSAN LABARR (b. 1981)

With determination (♩ = 54)

Soprano Alto *unis. p*

Per-haps it does not _____ be-

Piano *p*

Pedal harmonically

4

gin. Per-haps it is al - ways. Per-haps...it

7

takes a life-time to op-en our eyes, — to learn to see- the

10

mp

lum-in-ous line of the map in the dark, the vi - gil flame in the house of the heart, the

12

love so sear - ing we can't keep from sing - ing, the

14 *poco cresc.* (melody) *mf*

S1 lum-in-ous line_ of the map in the dark, the vi - gil flame in the house of the heart, the

(melody) *poco cresc.* *mf*

S2 lum-in-ous line_ of the map in the dark, the vi - gil flame in the house of the heart, the

(melody) *poco cresc.* *mf*

A lum-in-ous line_ of the map in the dark, the vi - gil flame in the house of the heart, the

poco cresc. *mf*

16

love so sear - ing we can't keep from sing - ing, from cry - ing out. _____

love so sear - ing we can't keep from sing - ing, from cry - ing out. _____

love so sear - ing we can't keep from sing - ing, from cry - ing out. _____

19 *mp*

Per-haps it does not be - gin.

(melody) *mp*

Per-haps it does not be - gin.

(melody) *mp*

Per-haps it does not be - gin.



22

Per - haps it is al - ways. Per-

Per-haps it is al ways. Per-haps it

Per-haps it is al ways. Per-haps it



24 *mf*

haps_ it takes a life-time__ to op-en_ our eyes and see- the

mf

takes_ a life-time to op-en our eyes, __ to learn to see- the

mf

takes_ a life-time to op-en our eyes, __ to learn to see- the

27

lum-in-ous line of the map in the dark, the vi - gil flame in the house of the heart, the

lum-in-ous line of the map in the dark, the vi - gil flame in the house of the heart, the

lum-in-ous line of the map in the dark, the vi - gil flame in the house of the heart, the

mf

29

love so sear - ing we can't keep from sing - ing, the

love so sear - ing we can't keep from sing - ing, the

love so sear - ing we can't keep from sing - ing, the

31

(melody)

lum-in-ous line_ of the map in the dark, the vi - gil flame in the house of the heart, the

lum-in-ous line_ of the map in the dark, the vi - gil flame in the house of the heart, the

lum-in-ous line_ of the map in the dark, the vi - gil flame in the house of the heart, the

33

love so sear - ing we can't keep from sing - ing, from cry - ing out.

love so sear - ing we can't keep from sing - ing, from cry - ing out.

love so sear - ing we can't keep from sing - ing, from cry - ing out.

sub. *p*

36

p
Per-haps this day the light be - gins, _____

p
Per-haps this day the light be - gins, _____

p
Per-haps this day the light be - gins, _____

sub. *p*

39 *mp* *f*

Per-haps this day the light be-gins, _____ Per-haps this day the light be-

mp *f*

Per-haps this day the light be-gins, _____ Per-haps this

mp *f*

Per-haps this day the light be-gins, _____ Per-haps this

42 *(stay strong)*

gins in us, _____ Per-haps this day the light be-gins, _____

(stay strong)

day _____ the light be-gins, Per-haps this day the light be-gins, _____

(stay strong)

day the light be-gins in us, Per-haps this day the light be-gins, _____

(stay strong)

rall. ----- a tempo

45 *mf* *(poco)* *mp*

We are where the light be - gins. Per-haps it does not ___ be -

mf *(poco)* *mp*

We are where the light be - gins. Per-haps it does not ___ be -

mf *(poco)* *mp*

We are where the light be - gins. Per-haps it does not ___ be -

48 rit. -----

gin. Per-haps it is al - ways.

gin. Per-haps it is al - ways.

gin. Per-haps it is al - ways.

Where the Light Begins

Perhaps it does not begin.
Perhaps it is always.

Perhaps it takes
a lifetime
to open our eyes,
to learn to see
what has forever
shimmered in front of us—

the luminous line
of the map
in the dark

the vigil flame
in the house
of the heart

the love
so searing
we cannot keep
from singing,
from crying out
in testimony
and praise.

Perhaps this day
will be the mountain
over which
the dawn breaks.

Perhaps we
will turn our face
toward it,
toward what has been
always.

Perhaps
our eyes
will finally open
in ancient recognition,
willingly dazzled,
illuminated at last.

Perhaps this day
the light begins
in us.

-Jan Richardson

About the Work

This beautiful poem was originally written as a blessing for Christmas by writer and artist Jan Richardson. On her blog (adventdoor.com), she writes, "though we cannot see or feel or know all the ways that God is radiantly illuminating us, may we open ourselves toward that light. May we open our eyes, our hands, our hearts to meet it. May we lean into the light that begins in the deepest dark, bearing itself into this world *for us*."

In writing this piece for the Henry Middle School Varsity Treble Choir, their director asked me to contemplate the theme of "peace" for their concert program. This text, while originally written about Advent and the anticipation of Christmas, uses wonderfully universal words that relate to ideas of peace and hope. Jan's blessing makes me think that within each of us is the ability to work toward peace. It doesn't take a monumental action, just many little kindnesses that we can show to others every day which radiate out to bring light to the whole of humanity. When we love, accept, and care for all of our neighbors—despite our differences—we find that the light that the dark world so desperately needs begins in us.

-Susan LaBarr

About the Composer

Susan LaBarr (b. 1981) is a composer and choral editor living and working in Springfield, Missouri. Her compositions are published by Walton Music, Morningstar Music, and Santa Barbara Music Publishing. Susan has completed commissions for choirs worldwide, most notably Seraphic Fire, the National ACDA Women's Choir Consortium, and the Texas Choral Director's Association's Director's Chorus. She served as the Missouri Composer Laureate for 2012 and 2013. Her arrangement of *Quem pastores laudavere* appeared on New York Polyphony's 2014 Grammy-nominated album, *Sing Thee Nowell*. Her work for mezzo soprano and piano, *Little Black Book*, was premiered at Carnegie Hall in October 2019.

Central to Susan's musical vocabulary is the knowledge she gained from studying with Alice Parker at her home in Hawley, Massachusetts, where she attended the Composer's Workshop and Melody Studies Workshop. Susan attended Missouri State University in Springfield, where she received a Bachelor of Arts in music and a Master of Music in music theory. Susan, her husband Cameron, and their son Elliott reside in Springfield, Missouri, where Cameron is the Director of Choral Studies at Missouri State University and Susan works as Editor of Walton Music.

Duration: Approx. 3:44